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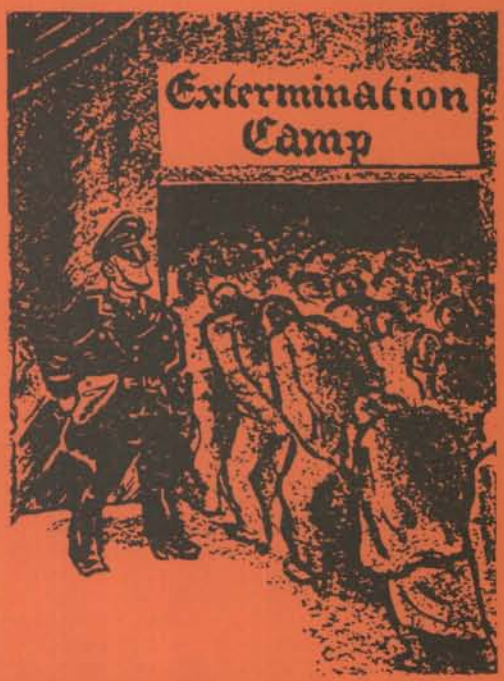
«*The Terrible Secret*»

Hitler's Holocaust

Who Knew What? When? and How?



"WHEN the shocking, appalling, unbelievable news of the extermination camps at Auschwitz reached the West—in 1942—murder became meaningless and death a mere statistic. . . . The human eye could not take in so much misery, the mind could not grasp so much cruelty. . . . In the shadow of the knowledge of the Holocaust we become aware of the blindness of perception: the paradox of 'knowing' and still not being 'aware'. . . ."

WALTER LAQUEUR, on the basis of new research and hitherto secret documents, presents for the first time the story of the tragic puzzle of why the whole of Europe, including the Russians and the British (and their American allies) "knew" all about Genocide—and did nothing.

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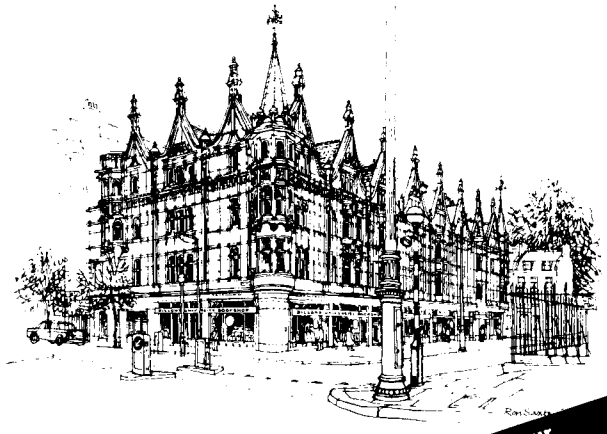

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WINGFIELD *(story)* 3 *Tobias Wolff*

HITLER'S HOLOCAUST 6 *Walter Laqueur*

POEMS

Bill Graham 5, *Vernon Scannell* 26, *Stanislaw Baranczak* 27, *Gay Clifford* 40

UNDER WESTERN EYES

CHOMSKY REVISITED 28 *Leopold Labedz*

SPECIAL BOOK SECTION: LITERATURE & CRITICISM

AN AGE OF PARODY 36 *Malcolm Bradbury*
SEEING IT CRUMPLE 53 *Laurence Lerner*
NOW READ ON 60 *Jill Mann*
WAYS OF ISOLATION 65 *Andrew Motion*
MIMIC HEAVENS 69 *Ian Fletcher*

TRAVEL

EXPERTS FOR EXPORT 79 *Anthony Thwaite*

ANTENNAE

THE ILLNESS OF A THERAPY 84 *Colin Brewer*

IN THE MARGIN

THE AUSTRIAN "MIRACLE" 91 *Melvin J. Lasky*

LETTERS 93

AUTHORS 96

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Tobias Wolff

Wingfield

WHEN WE ARRIVED at the camp they pulled us off the buses and made us do push-ups in the parking lot. The asphalt was hot and tar stuck to our noses. They made fun of our clothes and took them away from us. They shaved our heads until little white scars showed through, then filled our arms with boots and belts and helmets and punctured them with needles.

In the middle of the night they came to our barracks and walked up and down between us as we stood by our bunks. They looked at us. If we looked at them they said "Why are you looking at me?" and made us do push-ups. If you didn't act right they made your life sad.

They divided us into companies, platoons, and squads. In my squad were Wingfield and Parker and seven others. Parker was a wise-guy, my friend. I never saw anything get him down except malaria. Wingfield, before the military took responsibility for him, had been kept alive somewhere in North Carolina. When he was in a condition to talk his voice oozed out of him, thick and slow and sweet. His eyes when he had them open were the palest blue. Most of the time they were closed.

He often fell asleep while he polished his boots, and once while he was shaving. They ordered him to paint baseboards and he curled up in the corner and let the baseboards take care of themselves. They found him with his head resting on his outstretched arm, his mouth open; a string of paint had dried between the brush and the floor.

In the afternoons they showed us films: from these we learned how to maintain our jeeps, how to protect our teeth from decay, how to treat foreigners and how to sheathe ourselves against boils, nervous disorders, madness, and finally the long night of the blind. The foreigners wore shiny suits and carried briefcases. They smiled as they directed our soldiers to their destinations. They would do the same for us if we could remember how to ask them questions. As we repeated the important phrases to ourselves we could hear the air whistling in and out of Wingfield's mouth, rattling in the depths of his throat.

Wingfield slept as they showed us how our weapons worked, and what plants we could browse on if we got lost or ran out of food. Sometimes they caught him and made him stand up; he would smile shyly, like a young girl, and find something to lean against, and go back to sleep. He slept while we marched, which other soldiers could do; but other soldiers marched straight when they were supposed to turn and turned when they were supposed to march straight. They marched into trees and ditches and walls, they fell into holes. Wingfield could march around corners while asleep. He could sing the cadence and double-time at port arms without opening his eyes. You had to see it to believe it.

At the end of our training they drove us deep into the woods and set our company against another. To make the numbers even they gave the other side six of our men, Wingfield among them. He did not want to go but they made him. Then they handed out blank ammunition and coloured scarves, blue for us and red for them.

The presence of these two colours made the woods dangerous. We tip-toed from bush to bush, crawled on our stomachs through brown needles under the stunted pines. The bark of the trees was sweating amber resin but you couldn't stop and stare. If you dawdled and day-dreamed you would be taken in ambush. When soldiers with red scarves walked by we hid and shot them from behind and sent them to the parking lot, which was no longer a park-

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ing lot but the land of the dead.

A wind sprang up, bending and shaking the trees; their shadows lunged at us. Then darkness fell over the woods, sudden as a trap closing. Here and there we saw a stab of flame and heard a shot, but soon this scattered firing fell away. We pitched tents and posted guards; sat in silence and ate food from cans, cold. Our heartbeats echoed in our helmets.

PARKER THREW rocks. We heard them thumping the earth, breaking brittle branches as they fell. Someone yelled at him to stop, and Parker pointed where the shout came from.

Then we blackened our faces and taped our jingling dog-tags, readied ourselves to raid. We slipped into the darkness as though we belonged there, like shadows. Gnats swarmed, mosquitoes stung us, but we did not slap; we were that stealthy. We went on until we saw, not far ahead, a fire. A fire! The fools had made a fire! Parker put his hand over his mouth and shook his head from side to side, signifying laughter. The rest of us did the same.

We only had to find the guards to take the camp by surprise. I found one right away, mumbling and exclaiming in his sleep, his rifle propped against a tree. It was Wingfield. With hatred and contempt and joy I took him from behind, and as I drew it across his throat I was wishing that my finger was a knife. Twisting in arms, he looked into my black face and said "Oh my God" as though I was no imposter but Death himself.

Then we stormed the camp, firing into the figures lumped in sleeping bags around the fire, firing into the tents and into the shocked white faces at the tent-flaps. It was exactly the same thing that happened to us a year and three months later as we slept beside a canal in the Mekong Delta, a few kilometres from Ben Tré.

We were sent home on leave when our training ended and when we regrouped several of us were missing, sick or AWOL, or sent overseas to fill the ranks of units picked clean in the latest fighting. Wingfield was among them. I never saw him again and I never expected to. From now on his nights would be filled with shadows like me, and against such enemies what chance did Wingfield have?

PARKER GOT MALARIA two weeks before the canal attack, and was still in the hospital when it happened. When he got out they sent him to another unit. He wrote letters to me, but I never answered them. They were full of messages for people who weren't alive any more, and I thought it would be a good thing if he never knew this. Then he would lose only one friend instead of twenty-six. At last the letters stopped and I did not hear from him again for nine years, when he knocked on my door one evening just after I'd come home from work.

He had written my parents, he explained, and they had told him where I was living. He said that he and his wife and daughter were just passing through on their way to Canada, but I knew better. There were other ways to go than this and travellers always took them. He wanted an accounting.

Parker's daughter played with my dogs and his wife cooked steaks in the barbecue pit while we drank beer and talked and looked each other over. He was still cheerful, but in a softer, slower way, like a jovial uncle of the boy he'd been. After we ate we lay on the blanket until the bugs got to our ankles and the child began to whine. Parker's wife carried the dishes into the house and washed them while we settled on the steps. The light from the kitchen window laid a garish patch upon the lawn. Things crawled toward it under the grass. Parker asked the question he'd come to ask and then sat back and waited while I spoke name after name into the night. When I finished he said "Is that all? What about Washington?"

"I told you. He got home all right."

"You're sure about that?"

"Of course, I'm sure."

"You ought to get married", said Parker, standing up. "You take yourself too seriously. What the hell, right?"

Parker's daughter was lying on the living-room floor next to my golden retriever, who growled softly in his sleep as Parker lifted the girl and slung her over his shoulder. His wife took my arm and leaned against me as we walked out to the car. "I feel so comfortable with you", she said. "You remind me of my grandfather."

"By the way", said Parker, "do you remember Wingfield?"

"He was with that first bunch that got sent over", I said. "I don't think he made it back."

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"Who told you that?"

"Nobody. I just don't think he did."

"You're wrong. I saw him." Parker shifted the girl to his other shoulder. "That's what I was going to tell you. I was in Charlotte six months ago and I saw him in the train station, sitting on a bench."

"You didn't."

"Oh yes I did."

"How was he? What did he say?"

"He didn't say anything. I was in a hurry and he looked so peaceful I just couldn't bring myself to wake him up."

"But it was definitely him?"

"It was Wingfield all right. He had his mouth open."

I waved at their car until it made the turn at the end of the street. Then I rummaged through the garbage and filled the dogs' bowls with the bones and gristle Parker's wife had thrown away. As I inspected the dishes she had washed the thought came to me that this was a fussy kind of thing for a young man to do.

I OPENED a bottle of wine and went outside. The coals in the cooking pit hissed and flushed as the wind played over them, pulling away the smoke in tight spirals. I could sense the wings of the bats wheeling above me, gleaning the darkness, and like a soldier on leave, like a boy who knows nothing at all, like a careless and go-to-hell fellow I drank to them. Then I drank to the crickets and locusts and cicadas who purred so loudly that the earth itself seemed to be snoring. I drank to the snoring earth, to the closed eye of the moon, to the trees that nodded and sighed: until, already dreaming, I fell back upon the blanket.

Very flat, Norfolk

A bad week-end to choose, in some respects. Through
Wedges carved from the windscreen's crust, leaden air,
Soldered by snow to roads and iron canals; no man's land
Except for, at a distance, low-hipped barns and silos.
Markets, wharves and warehouses assume a bland
Identity, in part attributable to
This meteorological coincidence we share,
Linked by our wipers' frantic signalling. True,

The landscape's the same as on those other days, when
Clouds like bolsters stack themselves above the laden
Barges, flinty spires and gleaming estuary mud—an
Affair of plain perspectives, level shadows,
Parallelograms of fen-land. A woman
With a pail of peelings pushes through the rotten
Gate into her small-holding, hands part-hidden
Twitch at a curtain and what strikes me then

Is a disturbing sense of lives whose centres are so
Different from our own—a birthday, grief, a garage
Bill, gardening, toothache or a tradesman's call. Queer
How this disquietude's dispelled, quietly narrows
To complacency amid the wintry sameness. Dear,
Faced with such blank deception can we know
What acres of conformity may camouflage
The true terrain beneath our blanket of snow?

Bill Graham

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Walter Laqueur

Hitler's Holocaust

Who Knew What, When, & How?

WHEN THE British Army entered Belsen on 15 April 1945, a correspondent opened his dispatch with the following words:

> "It is my duty to describe something beyond the imagination of mankind."

But Belsen was not even an extermination camp; people died there from hunger and disease, few were deliberately killed. Three years had passed since the world had first been informed about the existence of extermination camps; their location was known, the methods of murder, the numbers of the victims, even the names of their commanding officers. But all this had not quite been grasped or understood or registered; and this raises certain questions.

I have tried to discover how the first news about the "final solution" (Hitler's *Endlösung*) reached the outside world in 1942—the Jews inside and outside Europe, the Poles, the Allies, and the neutrals. On one hand, this is a study in "Wartime information", which shows that Nazi Germany was not a hermetically closed society, that despite secrecy and disinformation the accurate and believable facts of the final solution became known through many different channels. But it also touches on a wider cognitive issue: What is the meaning of "to know" and "to believe"? The problem was put most succinctly by Judge Felix Frankfurter in a meeting during the War with Jan Karski, a recently arrived Polish underground emissary, who informed him about the mass slaughter in Europe. Frankfurter told Karski that he did not believe him. When Karski protested, Frankfurter explained that he did not imply that Karski had in any way lied—he simply meant that he could not believe him—there was a difference. . . .

SHORTLY AFTER THE END of the War Abbé Glasberg, a courageous churchman of Russian-Jewish origin who had done much to save French Jews, wrote that he found it difficult to explain how during all these years the Allied intelligence services should have not known—or ignored—the truth about the Hitlerite extermination camps which extended over many square kilometres and in which millions of people had been incarcerated.[1]

It is a legitimate question. True, no intelligence service is omniscient; but in this specific instance there was no need for brilliant analytical skills and great penetration. Letters and postcards told the story, and sometimes it was even reported in the press. The critical period is July 1941 to the end of 1942. American intelligence was then only starting its operations while the British services were already in top gear. While everything that happened in Nazi-occupied Europe was of interest to these services, there were, of course, priorities; and the fate of an ethnic or religious minority did not figure very high on their agenda. But, on the other hand, no intelligence service in Europe could

[1] The Abbé Glasberg, *A recherche d'une patrie* (Paris, 1946), p. 64.

WALTER LAQUEUR, *on the basis of new research and hitherto classified documents in various European and American archives, presents here for the first time the story of a tragic puzzle—why all of Europe, including the Russians and the British (and their American allies), as well as the Swiss and Swedish neutrals, the Vatican and the International Red Cross, "knew" about Genocide . . . and did nothing.*

In a new book, entitled "The Terrible Secret" (shortly to be published by Weidenfeld in London and Little, Brown in New York), Professor Laqueur—who has contributed to ENCOUNTER *since its earliest numbers—breaks new ground as an historian and, perforce, as a psychologist. As the appalling, unbelievable news of the extermination camps at Auschwitz reached the West—Hitler's grisly "Final Solution" was public knowledge in 1942—the idea of mass murder became meaningless and death a mere statistic. Evidently the human eye could not take in so much misery, the mind could not grasp so much cruelty. In the shadow of such knowledge of the Holocaust we become aware of the blindness of perception: the horrific paradox of "knowing" and still not being "aware."* ***M. J. L.***

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possibly help hearing about "the Final Solution" in 1942 for the simple reason that it was common knowledge on the Continent. Details were perhaps shrouded in mystery, but the picture in general was not. As Hitler had predicted, the Jews were "disappearing."

The Allied governments heard about this from a variety of sources. In Britain there was SIS (Special Intelligence Service, i.e. military intelligence) which was, in principle, in charge of all news-gathering operations. But Special Operations Executive (SOE) which had been founded to function abroad under the control of the Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW) did in fact also collect news in France, in Denmark, and elsewhere. All intelligence from Poland was passed to SIS automatically from the Polish Second Bureau, except that concerning purely domestic affairs. Similar agreements existed between Britain and Dutch, French, Czech and Norwegian Intelligence. But SOE was also active in Poland. MI5, the Security Service, obtained interesting information from the various interrogation centres it was running; so did MI9 (CSDIC) and MI19, dealing with British soldiers and civilians escaping from the continent respectively. Decoding and deciphering came from GC and CS (the government code and cypher school), whereas aerial reconnaissance was in the hands of the Air Ministry. The bureaucratic complications were manifold; but whatever the source, important news should always have reached the Prime Minister, the War Cabinet, and the Chiefs of Staff.[2]

But what is "important news"? Intelligence quite often consists of small and perhaps insignificant items which, taken in isolation, appear to be of no consequence. A certain pattern emerges only if they are interpreted in a broader context. There is, furthermore, an unlimited number of ways of getting things wrong and only one right answer. Intelligence, like writing history, is a matter of selection, and the fact that a certain event was duly observed does not *per se* mean that it was correctly understood. It certainly does not mean that such information always reached the higher ranks of the Intelligence services (such as the Joint Intelligence Committee which acted as a liaison between the various agencies) and especially not the War Cabinet whose capacity for absorbing information was, of necessity, limited.

Thus, for my purposes, it is not sufficient to establish that members of one branch of the Polish or British Intelligence "knew." It is important to know how widely the information was distributed, whether it was read and accepted; and this, of course, is usually more difficult to document.[3]

DURING THIS TIME London was the focal point for news from Occupied Europe. Not all information received in the West came from Intelligence sources. The Americans had an embassy in Berlin until December 1941, in Budapest and Bucharest until January 1942, in Vichy up to late 1942. Jewish organisations received most of their information from their representatives in Geneva; and further news was received through dozens of different channels, such as visitors to or from neutral countries, the press, soldiers who had escaped, civilians who had been exchanged, and others.

Much information could be found in the daily press. Thus, a report entitled "THE APOCALYPSE" in a London German-language newspaper in October 1941 said that the Jews deported from Germany were to be killed in one way or another. It was based on a report originally published in the Swedish *Socialdemokraten* on 22 October and stated *expressis verbis* that "there was no doubt that this was a case of premeditated mass murder." The account also mentioned Adolf Eichmann as the head of the operation.[4]

1. The Russian Self-Censorship

WE MUST FIRST TURN TO Russia, because it was in the areas occupied by the Nazis following their rapid advance between June and October

[2] The structure of British Intelligence is described authoritatively in F. H. Hinsley *et al., British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vol. I (London, 1979).

[3] But sometimes the documentary details can be established.

Emissaries from Poland arriving in Britain were interrogated and debriefed by the British services before they could contact the Poles. One of the Wartime emissaries describes his arrival in Britain as follows:

> "After my arrival on a Scottish airport I was first interrogated by Major Malcolm Scott, probably on behalf of counter-intelligence; his family owned a factory in Lwow and he spoke Polish as well as I did. I was then debriefed in the 'Patriotic School' in South London by representatives of various other intelligence services; in greatest detail by MI9 who were interested in the fate of the British prisoners-of-war. I was also interviewed by McLaren and Osborn of the Foreign Office (Polish Intelligence). Depositions were made; I saw some of them recently among the papers in the Public Record Office. There was no interest in what I had to report on the fate of the Jews; there was one exception, and this was on a personal rather than official basis."

To these three who were informed about the systematic extermination of Jews, Majors (subsequently Colonels) Gubbins and Perkins should be added, who were dealing with Poland on behalf of SOE; Major Gubbins later became operational head of all SOE. Neither of them was apparently expected to, or did, take an interest in this subject.

[4] *Die Zeitung* (London), 25 October 1941. The Swedish account was also carried in the *Sunday Times* of 24 October and in other newspapers. Eichmann's name had figured in Swedish diplomatic reports much earlier—in November 1939, but this account was based on a report made by two members of the Swedish embassy in Berlin, Einar von Post and Karl Damgren, about transports of Jews from Moravia.

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1941 that the systematic murder of European Jewry began. This was the task of the *Einsatzgruppen*, special units which entered the Soviet Union with the German troops. By November 1941 they had killed about half-a-million Jews. At first, little was known about this to the general public, for these areas were virtually cut off from the outside world. American Jewish newspapers carried reports about the killing of Jews in certain border towns, but this was probably no more than guesswork based on the behaviour of the Nazis in Poland and elsewhere. A little later Swedish papers reported that ghettos had been organised in Vilna, Kaunas, and Bialystok. According to a broadcast from Moscow Radio in August, some 45 Jews had been machine-gunned near Minsk.[5] On 5 September, the London Polish government-in-exile knew about the Riga ghetto; and on the 18th of that month the news reached Zurich from Poland that Bialystok ghetto had been destroyed (which was quite untrue, for it was one of the last to be liquidated, in 1943). On 22 October 1941, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) correspondent in Zurich quoted a Ukrainian newspaper (*Krakovskie Vesti*) as reporting that the German forces had expelled the Jews to an unknown destination and that in Zhitomir out of 50,000 Jews only 6,000 remained. On 29 October, another report from Polish circles in London said that 6,000 Jews had been killed in Lomza; and in early November the Swedish press announced that Riga Jews were on half-rations. More and more information was received—but perhaps not enough, as yet, to realise the magnitude of the disaster.

THEN, ON 25 NOVEMBER 1941, JTA carried a sensational and remarkably accurate report which it said had originated "on the German frontier" but had been delayed. According to "an unimpeachable source", 52,000 men, women and children had been put to death in Kiev. The victims (it was said) did not lose their lives as a result of a mob pogrom but by "merciless, systematic extermination." It was one of the most "shocking massacres in Jewish history", and similar events had taken place elsewhere in other Soviet towns. We do not know where this report originated; it certainly did not come from a Russian source. Most likely it emanated from Polish circles. Confirmation from Soviet sources came, however, in early January 1942 when it was made known that 52,000 people had been killed in Kiev. The US embassy in Moscow tried to establish whether all (or most) of these had been Jews; and on 16 March 1942 it received an affirmative answer. But on the next day the Jewish press announced (on the authority of the *Soviet War Bulletin* in London) that there had been a misunderstanding, and that only 1,000 Jews had been killed. This "correction" was, of course, quite misleading, but it is impossible now to establish whose error it was.

Meanwhile, there was more alarming news. On 2 January 1942 the London *Jewish Chronicle* reported, on the authority of Soviet partisans operating behind the German lines, that the Germans had killed hundreds of Jews in Rostow-on-the-Don. Polish sources reported in March the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry. By 15 May 1942 this news was quite detailed: 7,000 had been killed in Shavli; 30,000 were left out of 70,000 in Vilna. The Stockholm newspaper *Socialdemokraten* reported that the Jews in the Riga ghetto were selling their last belongings; this was based on a report in the Nazi *Deutsche Zeitung in Ostland*. From Soviet sources there was very little information. A detailed report from Borisov was an exception: 15,000 Jews had been killed there (25 March 1942); there was a shorter and less specific account of the mass murder of Jews in Mariupol.

IN A NOTE signed by Molotov and addressed to all governments with which it maintained diplomatic relations, on 6 January 1942 the Soviet Union dealt with the

> "monstrous villainies, atrocities and outrages committed by German authorities in the invaded Soviet territories. . . ."[6]

This note extended over many pages, and there were three references to Jews. Once they were mentioned together with Russians, Ukrainians, Letts, Armenians, Uzbeks and others who had also suffered; the second time there was a short reference that on 30 June, when the Germans had entered Lvov, they had staged an orgy of murder under the slogan "Kill the Jews and the Poles." And, lastly, there was the reference to the murder of the 52,000 in Kiev. It stated that many mass murders had also been committed by the German occupiers in other Ukrainian towns and then continued:

> "These bloody executions were especially directed against unarmed and defenceless Jewish working people. According to incomplete figures, no less than 6,000 persons were shot in Lvov,

[5] *Stockholm Tidningen*, 22 July and 10 August 1941; *Aftonbladet*, 18 August 1941.

[6] *Pravda*, 7 January 1942. Occasionally there were Soviet reports for publication abroad only: for instance, the report issued by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Kuybishev on the murder of 72,000 Jews in Minsk between November 1941 and April 1942. This appeared in British and American newspapers (cf. *Daily Telegraph*, 15 August 1942), but not in the major Soviet newspapers.

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> over 8,000 in Odessa, nearly 8,500 were shot or hanged in Kamenets-Podolsk, more than 10,500 shot down with machine guns in Dnepropetrovsk and over 3,000 local inhabitants shot in Mariupol. . . . According to preliminary figures about 7,000 persons were killed by the German fascist butchers in Kerch."

Altogether Molotov accounted for some 90,000 victims, less than one fifth the figure of those who had actually been killed.[7]

On 27 April 1942 a second Soviet note was published also signed by Molotov. It extended over 27 pages, dealt with looting, the institution of a régime of slavery, the destruction of the national culture of various peoples, the desecration of churches, the torturing and killing of workers and peasants, the raping of women, and the extermination of prisoners of war. But it did not mention that while a great many people of various nationalities had indeed been robbed, injured and even killed, the Jews—unlike the others—were singled out for wholesale destruction. In this document the Jews were mentioned just once—together with Russians, Moldavians, Ukrainians, and other victims.

There was a third Molotov note (14 October 1942), on the responsibility of the Hitlerite invaders and their accomplices for atrocities perpetrated, in which the Jews were not mentioned at all. But, as an addendum (or post-script), an unsigned statement was distributed on 19 December 1942 by the Soviet Foreign Ministry Information Bureau dealing specifically with the "execution by Hitlerite authorities of the plan to exterminate the Jewish population in the occupied territory of Europe." This was a relatively short document, but it presented more facts and figures than had been published in the preceding year-and-a-half taken together. It also mentioned the plan to concentrate millions of Jews from all parts of Europe "for the purpose of murdering them."[8]

WHY DID IT TAKE the Soviet government eighteen months to publish these facts and what were the reasons inducing it to play down the numbers of Jews among the victims, or even pass over it in silence?

The first six months of the War were, from the Soviet point of view, the most difficult. Millions of soldiers were taken prisoner, large parts of the country lost. The population frequently gave a warm welcome to the foreign invaders. There were few if any partisans during these early months of the War. But, on the other hand, not everyone in the Occupied areas became a collaborator with the Germans, and not a few Soviet Intelligence agents were left behind. In addition, parachutists were dropped early on behind German lines, some to commit acts of sabotage, others to collect information. There was radio contact between the Occupied territories and "*Bolshaia Zemlia*" from the very beginning; and while there is no reason to assume that the *NKVD* (as it was then called) and the Red Army Staff received daily bulletins from every Occupied village, there is every reason to assume that the Soviet authorities were from the beginning well informed about all important events in the Occupied territories. While Russian archives have not been opened to curious Western (or even Soviet) researchers, Soviet authors proudly mention how well their authorities were informed about "all that happened on the other side."

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS CASES was that of N. I. Kusnetsov who, in the guise of a German officer (under the name of "Paul Siebert"), became part of the establishment of Erich Koch, one of Hitler's three satraps in Eastern Europe. Koch had established his headquarters in Rovno. Since, up to 1941, every second inhabitant of the city of Rovno was a Jew, their disappearance—they had all been executed in the town or its vicinity—could not possibly have escaped the attention of this Soviet master-agent.

The fate of the Jews—and how much was known about it at the time—occurs infrequently in Soviet post-War writings. Thus, a discussion between two *KGB (NKVD)* agents in Kiev in late 1941:

> "You know, of course, what happened in Babi Yar?"
>
> "Yes, and the same happened in Vinnitsa. . . ."[9]

There is always a reluctance to mention the fact that these victims were Jews. For the Soviet authorities, the agents left behind in Kiev, Odessa, Minsk, and many other places were by no means the only source of information; as Soviet troops retook in the winter offensive of 1941–42 some of the regions previously seized by the *Wehrmacht* they saw what had happened under German occupation.

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[7] The fact that Soviet reports about categories of victims were selective was noticed in Washington. The OSS "Department of research and analysis" published a nine-page memorandum in 1943 entitled *Gaps in the Moscow Statement of Atrocities*, which stressed that "non-Aryans were not mentioned. . . ." (OSS-Washington D.C., R&A-1626, 12 December 1943).

[8] *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 19 December 1942.

[9] *Front bez liniya fronta* (Moscow, 1975), p. 63. This is a collection of essays written by or about *NKVD* agents left behind in the Nazi-occupied areas. Vasili Ardamatski's novel, *Granat calling Moscow*, also deals with this topic. The official three-volume history of the Ukraine during the War mentions the fact that on 28 September 1941 the German authorities gave orders to the Jewish population to assemble at eight o'clock next morning; but from this point on the nationality of the victims is no longer mentioned. *Ukrainska ia SSR v velikoi otechestvennoi voini Sovetskovo Soyuza 1941–45*, Vol. I (Moscow, 1978), p. 351.

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Thus, with a few exceptions (such as the note of 13 December 1942), the Soviet line was that the Hitlerite invaders behaved, generally speaking, like barbarians. But there was no mention of the fact that the Jews were singled out for "special treatment."

What was the reason for this silence?

The Soviet authorities could argue that even though the Nazis singled out the Jews in their campaign of murder, little would be gained if the Soviet Union publicised this fact. For the murder of the Jews may well have been quite popular in some sections of the population: Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Latvians had played a prominent part in the massacres. If the German invaders, nevertheless, rapidly became unpopular in the occupied areas, it was not because of their behaviour towards the Jews. For this reason, and perhaps also because of certain other considerations, the Soviet authorities played down the "Final Solution." Not unlike the Vatican, the Russians certainly knew much more than they decided to publish. The news about the *Einsatzgruppen* came mainly from neutral journalists, from Polish Intelligence, and from Hungarian and Italian soldiers fighting on the Eastern front. It did not come from those who knew most about it.[10]

2. News in The West

BY 1 JULY 1942 more than one million Jews had been killed in Eastern Europe. What was known about this in the West?

Hitler's offensive in Russia was in full swing, the German armies were advancing in the direction of Stalingrad, Rostow, and the Caucasus. The *Einsatzgruppen* had finished their second sweep in Russia. In Poland the destruction of the ghettos had begun in March with the removal of the Jews from Lublin district (the very region in which, according to Nazi propaganda, a Jewish "autonomous region" should have come into existence). The gas-chambers of Chelmno, Belzec, and Auschwitz were working. The notorious Wannsee conference had taken place six months earlier; the deportations from Slovakia had begun in March, and trainloads of Jews were beginning to arrive in Poland from Central and Western Europe.

From Russia there was little information. Correspondents in Switzerland picked up random items from Nazi newspapers in the occupied areas. Thus, the *Grenzbote* of Bratislava announced in April that the "deportations" from Slovakia had taken place, and the Belgrade *Donauzeitung* wrote in June that no Jews were left in Kishinev. The correspondent in Turkey of the London *Sunday Times* also reported in April 1942 that 120,000 Rumanian Jews had been killed, a figure which proved to be remarkably accurate. All these were minor items as far as the world press were concerned, overshadowed by the news of the great battles on the War fronts, and they did not attract much attention. In May and June 1942, with great delay, some more information became available about events in the Baltic countries. On 15 May, Polish sources in London provided figures on Vilna—the murder of 40,000.[11]

On the following day a correspondent of the London *Evening Standard* in Stockholm reported that the number was even higher: 60,000 Jews had been killed in this city alone. The news was published on the authority of a man who had escaped from Vilna and had just arrived after a dramatic escape via Warsaw and the port of Gdynia. The report was quite specific; it mentioned Ponary, the railway station outside Vilna where most of the killing had taken place. The item was picked up by some American and Jewish newspapers. Two months later (on 21 July), the US Ambassador reported it to Washington. There was silence for another two weeks, but towards the end of May 1942 information which had reached London through Polish couriers and radio messages found its way into the press. On 2 June, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcast excerpts from various reports received from Eastern Europe: 700,000 Jews had been killed so far. This figure was based on a report sent out by the Jewish Labour *Bund* from Warsaw, and in fact considerably understated the number of victims. But the Polish Jews had no full picture of the situation in the Soviet Union and the Baltic countries. Unlike Himmler they had no professional statisticians at their disposal for reviewing the progress of the "Final Solution."

The reports from Warsaw caused a flurry of activity in Polish circles—General Sikorski notified the Allied governments in a dispatch ("Extermination of the Jewish population is taking place to an unbelievable extent") on 10 June. The Polish National Council (the Parliament-in-exile) addressed an appeal to the free parliaments. On 9 June, General Sikorski said in a broadcast on the BBC:

[10] Towards the end of 1942 some more material became known from Soviet sources; but more often than not it was scheduled for publication outside the Soviet Union. Thus, a quotation from a diary written by a private "Christian" in February 1942: "Since we have been in this town we have already shot more than 13,000 Jews. We are south of Kiev."

Or the interrogation of P.O.W. Karl Brenner, Crimean front, 20 June 1942: "None of the Jews were ever seen again. It is said that they were shot 15 miles from Simferopol along the Feodosia road." *New Soviet Documents on Nazi Atrocities* (Soviet Embassy, London, 1942).

[11] Jewish Telegraph Agency bulletin (15–16 May 1942).

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> "The Jewish population in Poland is doomed to annihilation in accordance with the maxim 'Slaughter all the Jews regardless of how the war will end.' This year veritable massacres of tens of thousands of Jews have been carried out in Lublin, Wilno, Lwow, Stanislawow, Rzeszow and Miechow."

At first the newspapers did not take much notice. After all, news about Nazi persecutions came from many parts of Europe, and they were probably exaggerated. The fact that Jews were not "persecuted" but *exterminated* had not yet registered.

The first to stress the difference was the London *Daily Telegraph*, in two reports on 25 and 30 June 1942. These publications were a first turning-point because the journalists and their editors had realised that in the various news items from Eastern Europe a sinister new pattern had emerged; these were no longer "pogroms" in the traditional sense. The first dispatch began as follows:

> "More than 700,000 Polish Jews have been slaughtered by the Germans in the greatest massacres in the world's history."

It then announced that "the most gruesome details of mass killings even to the use of poison gas" were revealed in a report sent secretly to Shmuel Zygielbojm, the Jewish representative on the Polish National Council, by an active group in Poland (the *Bund*, which was not, however, mentioned by name). The *Daily Telegraph* report reviewed the mass exterminations in East Galicia and Lithuania, and the use of gas vans and the Chelmno camp, as well as other facts and figures. The correspondent ended:

> "I understand that the Polish government intends to make the facts in the report known to the British and Allied governments."

This had already happened.

The second report, five days later, said in its headline "MORE THAN 1,000,000 JEWS KILLED IN EUROPE." It was based on further investigations, not just the *Bund* report, and made one important point which had not been clearly spelled out previously: it was the aim of the Nazis "to wipe the race from the European continent", the policy of exterminating the Jews was also to cover Western Europe. In France, Holland, and Belgium there had been many executions; and mass deportations to Eastern Europe were now taking place. In Rumania 120,000 Jews had been killed, and two trainloads of Jews were leaving Prague every week for Poland.

> "It is estimated that the casualties suffered by the Jewish people in Axis-controlled countries already far exceed those of any other race in any war. . . ."

The *Daily Telegraph* stories attracted much attention. They were followed by radio broadcasts in June (by Arthur Greenwood, leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party; by Cardinal Hinsley; by the Dutch Prime Minister; by Zygielbojm, speaking in Yiddish; and a few others). The *New York Times* picked up the *Daily Telegraph* reports on 30 June and 2 July, and published them somewhere in the middle of the paper. The editors quite obviously did not know what to make of them. If it was true that a million people had been killed this clearly should have been front-page news; it did not, after all, happen every day. If it was not true, the story should not have been published at all. Since they were not certain they opted for a compromise: to publish it, but not in a conspicuous place. Thus it was implied that the paper had reservations about the report: "Quite likely" the story contained some truth, but "probably" it was exaggerated.

SUCH ATTITUDES were by no means limited to the American press. From the moment Hitler had come to power in Germany, *The Manchester Guardian* had shown much sympathy for the persecuted Jews. Yet on 31 August 1942, more than two months after the news about mass extermination of Jews in Europe (and certain additional information) had been received, an editorial in *The Guardian* stated that

> "the deportation of Jews to Poland means that Jewish muscles are needed for the German war effort."

It was, in brief, a matter of slave labour rather than murder.

But why single out *The Guardian*? President Roosevelt was saying exactly the same thing. The failure to understand was by no means limited to newspapers in Britain and the USA. Hebrew papers in Palestine were equally unhappy about the "unproven and exaggerated rumours", about the fact that news agencies and correspondents were competing in transmitting atrocity stories in gruesome detail.[12]

Shmuel Zygielbojm, the *Bund* representative on the Polish National Council, had provided the material for the *Daily Telegraph* stories. His colleague on the Council, Dr Ignacy Schwarzbart, was also active. He appeared on 29 June at a press conference sponsored by the World Jewish Congress in London together with Sidney Silverman, a Labour MP, and Ernst Frischer, a member of the Czechoslovak State Council. Ignacy Schwarzbart (1888–1961) had been a member of the pre-War

[12] See Y. Gelber's excellent monograph: *Haitonut ha'ivrit be' Erez Israel al Hashmadat Yehudei Europa*, in *Dapim le'heker hashoa ve'hamered* (Tel Aviv, 1969), p. 46.

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Polish parliament; unlike Zygielbojm he was not a Socialist. His statement dealt with the murder of Jews in Wilno, Pinsk, Bialystok, Slonim, Rowno, Lvov, Stanislawow, Lomza, and some two dozen other places. He announced that in Lublin part of the Jewish population had been slaughtered and the rest had disappeared; and he also gave figures about the Chelmno gassings.[13] This press conference was reported the next day in most British newspapers under headlines such as OVER 1,000,000 DEAD SINCE THE WAR BEGAN (*The Times*), 1,000,000 JEWS DIE (*Evening Standard*), MILLION JEWS DIE (*News Chronicle*), BONDAGE IN EASTERN EUROPE: A VAST SLAUGHTERHOUSE OF JEWS (*Scotsman*). But most of these reports were fairly short, not conspicuously displayed, and contained few details. Few Western newspaper readers had ever heard about Lomza and Stanislawow; and while, by now, it seemed fairly certain that something sinister was happening in Eastern Europe, there were still doubts about the extent and the real meaning of these unhappy events.

IN JULY AND AUGUST the general attitude among Jews was a mixture of concern and confusion. There were mass meetings in New York (Madison Square Garden, 21 July), and protest demonstrations in various other cities, and on 23 July the chaplain of the House of Representatives read a special prayer for the Jewish victims as the session of the House opened. In London there were resolutions by the national executive committees of the Labour Party (22 July) and the Trade Unions; a Labour delegation went to see Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden (24 August) and John Winant, the US Ambassador. On 2 September, there was a large protest rally in Caxton Hall at which Herbert Morrison and Jan Masaryk spoke. Zygielbojm, in a passionate speech, reiterated that crimes had been committed that had no precedent in human history, crimes so monstrous that the most barbaric acts of past ages appeared as mere trivialities:

> "In Poland a whole people is being exterminated in cold blood . . . it is estimated that the total number of Jews murdered by the Germans in Poland up to May this year was 700,000."

Zygielbojm seemed over-excited and overwrought to many of those present. Yet, by the time he made his speech the number of Jews killed was at least a million-and-a-half, and the Warsaw ghetto had been all but emptied.[14]

3. *The Riegner Report*

THE QUESTION OF the number of victims quite apart, a clear general pattern had emerged. Obviously, there had been a decision at the highest level to kill all Jews. When had it been taken? This information could not possibly come from Warsaw or from Riga, and we have now to turn to an episode which has been recounted before but which is still far from clear. The first news that Hitler had actually ordered the extermination of European Jewry by gassing was received in July 1942 by Dr Gerhardt Riegner, the representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, from a German industrialist. Riegner sent the following cable to London and Washington:

> "RECEIVED ALARMING REPORT THAT IN FUEHRER'S HEADQUARTERS PLAN DISCUSSED AND UNDER CONSIDERATION ACCORDING TO WHICH ALL JEWS IN COUNTRIES OCCUPIED OR CONTROLLED GERMANY NUMBERING THREE-AND-A-HALF FOUR MILLIONS SHOULD AFTER DEPORTATION AND CONCENTRATION IN EAST BE EXTERMINATED AT ONE BLOW TO RESOLVE ONCE FOR ALL THE JEWISH QUESTION IN EUROPE STOP THE ACTION REPORTED PLANNED FOR AUTUMN METHODS UNDER DISCUSSION INCLUDING PRUSSIC ACID STOP WE TRANSMIT INFORMATION WITH ALL RESERVATION AS EXACTITUDE CANNOT BE CONFIRMED STOP INFORMANT STATED TO HAVE CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH HIGHEST GERMAN AUTHORITIES AND HIS REPORTS GENERALLY SPEAKING RELIABLE."

Some of this was already known, and some was incorrect. The plan was not "under consideration" but had been adopted many months earlier. Nor was it intended to kill all the Jews at one blow,

[13] But Schwarzbart took a more cautious line than Zygielbojm.

In a letter to the editor of the London *Jewish Chronicle* (dated 29 June 1942, unpublished, Schwarzbart archives), he wrote that "every exaggeration in rounding up figures is not only needless but also harmful and irresponsible." He regretted that "my colleague in the National Council" had taken it upon himself to refer to 700,000 Jews who had been murdered whereas one should have said "exterminated." Schwarzbart followed the lead given by the Polish Minister of Information, Professor Stanislaw Stronski, who said (on 9 July, at a press conference sponsored by the British Ministry of Information) that the figure of 700,000 which had appeared in the press "included both those murdered directly and those who died as a result of the German extermination policy."

It is not readily obvious why Schwarzbart should have attributed so much importance to the difference between being "murdered" and being "exterminated", unless he doubted the veracity of the reports from Poland. The *Bund* report, in any case, was quite unambiguous: 700,000 Jews had been murdered (*Niemcy wymordowali . . .*).

[14] Zygielbojm committed suicide in March 1943, in protest against the general indifference shown with regard to the fate of the Jews in Poland. See footnote 49 below (p. 22).

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which would have presented insurmountable technical difficulties. But, for all this, it was of course true that Hitler had made a decision, and now a German source had made it clear that this did not refer to widespread pogroms but to a "Final Solution." Riegner transmitted the information "with all reservation." One could hardly blame him for such caution.

GERHARDT RIEGNER was just 30 years of age at the time. He was a native of Berlin and a doctor of law. He and Richard Lichtheim, his senior by 30 years who represented the Jewish Agency in Geneva and the father of the writer George Lichtheim, were the two chief Jewish representatives in continental Europe. But who was the mysterious industrialist?

Various versions have been published about his identity. He arrived in Switzerland in July 1942. It was not his first visit in Wartime. He had been in contact through a common friend with Dr Benjamin Sagalowitz (1901–70), the press officer of the Swiss Jewish community. The industrialist was in charge of a factory employing some 30,000 workers, and was a passionate enemy of the Nazi system. Driven by his conscience, he wanted to warn the world so that something could be done in time to counteract Hitler's designs. The industrialist asked the mutual friend to convey the news to Sagalowitz who was not, however, in Zurich at the time. After his return he transmitted the information to Riegner assuming that Riegner could reach Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York and through Wise, President Roosevelt. Leland Harrison, the US Ambassador in Berne, insisted on knowing the name of the informant and since there was no other quick and certain channel to transmit the news to the USA, Sagalowitz gave the name (and indicated the position) of the industrialist to Harrison, who sealed it in an envelope. Sagalowitz concludes his account as follows:

> "Dr Riegner did not get the name from me, I brought the two gentlemen together only in February 1945. To relieve my conscience I told the industrialist after the war that I had given his name to the American minister and he understood. . . .[15]

Neither the archives of the late Dr Sagalowitz nor the files of the National Archives in Washington or the personal files of Ambassador Harrison provide a clue to his identity.[16] The files of the Berlin Swiss Legation in which applications for Wartime entry visas were preserved have been destroyed, and I have been assured that the records of the Swiss border police no longer exist.

Why should the industrialist who, as these lines are written, is no longer alive have insisted on anonymity even after the end of the War? There are two possible explanations. Could he have been a Swiss diplomat or an official of the International Red Cross or the World Council of Churches? This, for a variety of reasons, is unlikely.

The second possibility is more probable and more intriguing. When Riegner tried to establish in 1942 whether his informant could be trusted, he was given to understand (by Benjamin Sagalowitz) that the industrialist had on previous occasions given the Allies information on impending changes in the German Army high command (the deposition of von Bock in winter 1941), and, even more important, the date of Operation *Barbarossa*, the invasion of the Soviet Union. The official history of British Intelligence in the Second World War mentions among other warnings that the SIS representative in Geneva had heard (in late March or early April 1941) from a well-placed informant in German official sources that Hitler would attack Russia in May.[17] The British authorities will not disclose his identity for another 25 years (if ever); most of the personal files of the various Intelligence Services were apparently destroyed after the War. In any case, it is not certain that the industrialist was indeed the source.

THE REACTION TO the Riegner cable in London and Washington can be summarised briefly. On 10 August 1942 the Foreign Office received the message; four days later Frank Roberts of the Central Department wrote that the message could not be held up much longer although he feared that it would have embarrassing consequences: "Naturally we have no information bearing on this story." This was certainly true in the sense that there had been no report about a decision taken by

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[15] *Benjamin Sagalowitz* (a brochure privately published by his friends after his death in 1970), p. 31.

[16] According to the Hebrew edition of Arthur Morse's *While Six Millions Died*, it was Artur Sommer, but this is not correct.

Sommer had been on the outer fringe of the literary "Stefan George Circle", served as a World War I officer, and later became a member of the Nazi Party. He was an economic specialist in the German *Abwehr*, and when in Switzerland kept Professor Edgar Salin (a distinguished German refugee scholar) informed about atrocities and opportunities to rescue Jews in the *Reich*.

In my efforts to establish incontrovertible proof as to the identity of the historic informant, I was led to other probabilities (as outlined in my article, "The Mysterious Messenger & the Final Solution", *Commentary*, March 1980). But my search proved finally inconclusive beyond the fact that his name starts with *S*. The only living knowledgeable source, Gerhard Riegner, has been asked about the matter countless times; but, having given his word not to divulge the man's name, he has steadfastly refused to respond. However, there is some reason to believe that the mysterious messenger was not, in fact, a major industrialist.

[17] F. H. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, p. 58.

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Hitler. But then Roberts had heard from David Kelly nine months earlier about the disappearance of some one-and-a-half million Jews; there had been other such stories from Polish sources, as D. Allen, also from the Central Department, noted (but Allen still thought it was a rather "wild story").

The cable was handed by the Foreign Office to a Labour MP, Sidney Silverman, who was subsequently seen at the Foreign Office by Sir Brograve Beauchamp and Colonel Ponsonby. He wanted to telephone Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York, who had contacts in the White House, but was told that this was out of the question; the Germans always listened in to such conversations. Furthermore he should consider whether any action taken by the Jewish institutions might not "annoy the Germans and make any action they were proposing to take even more unpleasant than it might otherwise have been. . . ." Lastly he was told that HM Government had no information confirming Riegner's story.

THE GENERAL VIEW in the Foreign Office was that the Germans were indeed treating the Jews very cruelly, starving them, and even massacring considerable numbers of those who were of no use to them in their growing labour difficulties. The Polish reports that the Germans had more far-reaching designs were apparently not believed. If the Jewish Congress wanted to publish Dr Riegner's story there was no objection, even though there was the possibility that the Jews would be victimised as a result and that Dr Riegner's source would be compromised. The British Government on its part had no intention of giving publicity to the report or using it in propaganda to Germany without further confirmation.[18] In short, the Foreign Office was not very helpful; but, with all its reservations, it did deliver the message.

The US State Department did not. Howard Elting, the US Vice Consul in Geneva, requested that the message be delivered to Rabbi Stephen Wise; but the State Department's division of European affairs opposed this. Paul Culbertson, the assistant chief, did not like the idea of sending the dispatch on to Wise. Elbridge Durbrow regarded the nature of the allegations as "fantastic." On 17 August, Leland Harrison was informed that the cable had not been delivered in view of the apparently unsubstantiated nature of the information.[19] But on 28 August, a copy of the Riegner cable reached Wise via the British Foreign Office which, despite grave doubts (on which more below), had not suppressed it.[20] Rabbi Wise got in touch with Sumner Welles who advised him to refrain from any public announcement of Hitler's extermination order until confirmation could be obtained.

DURING AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1942 additional evidence reached Washington. Some came from Geneva, including the confirmation of Hitler's decision by Carl J. Burckhardt, the "foreign minister" of the Red Cross.[21] On 3 October Riegner forwarded the evidence of two young Jews who had crossed the Swiss border; one of them was Gabriel Zivian who had been a witness to the massacre of the Jews in Riga and had arrived on 22 September.[22] The other new arrival had been from France to Stalingrad and back, and knew many details about the murders in Poland and Russia. Neither could possibly shed any new light on the *Fuehrer*'s order, nor could the postcards from Warsaw which had been received by Stern-

[18] Comments on the Riegner cable by F. Roberts, D. Allen, E. A. Walker, Miss Scofield, and draft prepared for Sir Brograve Beauchamp in F.O. 371 30917 XK 6759.

[19] Harrison asked Howard Elting Jr., the Vice Consul whom Riegner had first contacted on receiving the news, to send the cable directly to the Department of State. But his own comment (in a cable to Washington on the same date) was more than sceptical—he regarded it as a "wild rumor inspired by Jewish fears." A summary of his cable was passed on to OSS (RG 226, Berne, Folder 2, Box 2, Entry 4).

[20] A cable sent from the London branch of the World Jewish Congress on 1 September, suggesting action and international publicity, was intercepted and read by the US censorship, and promptly forwarded to the US State Department. A note to American Secretary of State A. A. Berle is affixed: "We will suppress if you approve."

[21] I will attempt to tell the full Burckhardt story in another place. He was a prolific historical writer, but unfortunately left no relevant correspondence. I believe I was the first historian, except for their own annalist, who had access to the files of the International Red Cross, in which Dr Burckhardt was one of the dominant Wartime figures.

When the IRC, which was very well-informed, officially decided to stay neutral, i.e. very silent, Dr Burckhardt found it necessary (after October 1942) to pass on what he had come to know. He spoke with an old Jewish friend and colleague from the Geneva Centre of Advanced Studies; he saw Paul Squire, the US Consul in Geneva, and informed him that while he had not actually seen the order he could confirm that Hitler had signed a death-warrant in 1941: that before the end of 1942 the *Reich* was to be freed of all Jews. Squire asked him whether the word extermination was used; Burckhardt explained that the actual phrase was *Judenrein* (clean, free or empty of Jews).

I have been assured by a director of the IRC that a search made in the Geneva IRC offices failed to turn up a Burckhardt report of this conversation. Squire's memo was in the form of a personal letter to Harrison, the US Minister in Berne, (*National Archives*, 9 November 1942). In his covering note Squire observed that, on the basis of Dr Burckhardt's information, "for the unfortunates only one solution remained, namely death."

[22] Dr Riegner wrote a seven-page *Report concerning the Jews in Latvia* on the basis of the Zivian interrogation (World Jewish Congress, Institute of Jewish Affairs, Archives, London).

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buch (the representative of orthodox Jewry) in Montreux reporting the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. But all these items fitted only too well into the general picture. So did a report from the US Embassy in Stockholm and another, very long and detailed, from Anthony J. Drexel Biddle Jr. (US Ambassador to the Allied governments-in-exile in London). This was based on a memorandum by Ernst Frischer, the Czech parliamentarian, who had appeared at the press conference in London in late June together with Schwarzbart and Silverman, whose report stated that there was no precedent for such organised wholesale killing in all Jewish history, nor indeed in the whole history of mankind. A copy of Biddle's report was sent directly to the White House.

US diplomats abroad were asked by the State Department to find out whether they had heard anything which could shed light on the Riegner report. Finally, on 22 October, Harrison met Dr Riegner and Richard Lichtheim, collected sworn affidavits from them, and forwarded the evidence to Washington. Eleven weeks had now passed since the original Riegner cable—and eleven months since the news about mass murder in Russia had first been received in the West.

Further reports from Jewish and non-Jewish circles continued to arrive. An account from a Vatican source said that mass executions of Jews in Poland were continuing. The number of Jews killed in each of the major centres was counted in tens of thousands. The victims were said to have been killed by poison gas, in chambers especially prepared for the purpose.[23]

The British Foreign Office had forwarded the Riegner cable to the United States despite the fact that it feared "embarrassing repercussions." Informed opinion in London was that German policy was to use able-bodied Jews as slave labour, not to exterminate them "at one blow." Even by late November officials in London still thought that there was no actual proof of these atrocities. But the probability was sufficiently great to justify some Allied "action", which in practical terms meant the publication of a declaration.

NOT ALL THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION emanating from Geneva was helpful, and some was quite wrong. Thus (according to another cable, sent by the Jewish representatives) the order for extermination had been proposed by Herbert Backe, the Nazi commissar for food supply, who wanted in this drastic way to alleviate the existing shortages, whereas Frank and Himmler had been opposing "the Final Solution" because Jewish labour (especially Jewish specialists) was needed for the War effort. This, needless to say, was pure speculation; Hitler's decision had nothing to do with Germany's food situation.[24]

There were certain discrepancies between the reports: some alleged that the Jews had been killed by poison gas, others mentioned some form of electrocution. There was one account claiming that the corpses of the victims were used for the manufacture of soap and artificial fertilisers (this apparently came from Sternbuch in Montreux, who had heard it from a Polish source). Riegner reported a similar story on the authority of an "anti-Nazi officer attached to German Army headquarters": there were two factories processing Jewish corpses for the manufacture of soap, glue, and lubricants. These unlikely stories reinforced the scepticism in London and Washington. As Frank Roberts wrote:

> "The facts are quite bad enough without the addition of such an old story as the use of bodies for the manufacture of soap."[25]

It emerged after the War that the story was in fact untrue. But the hair of female victims was used for the War effort; and the rumours about the production of soap from Jewish corpses had gained wide currency, in any case, among non-Jews in Poland, Slovakia, and Germany. They appeared in various confidential German reports and even in exchanges between Nazi leaders.[26]

But the repetition of rumours of this kind made all information about "the Final Solution" suspect in the eyes of highly-placed Americans and Englishmen, who had found it inconvenient in the first place. One of them was Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, the chairman of the British Intelligence Committee, who wrote as late as July 1943 that the Poles, and to a far greater extent the Jews, tended to exaggerate German atrocities "in order to stoke us up."[27]

IT WAS SAID THAT the news about the systematic mass murders could have "embarrassing repercus-

[23] 23 November 1942, National Archives 740.0016 E.W. 1939/726.

[24] Typical of the amateurish way in which Dr Riegner's information was handled in the United States was the fact that everything that had been sent from Geneva, including information which was clearly *not* scheduled for publication, was published in the *Congress Weekly* of 4 December 1942.

[25] Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (1979).

[26] See, for instance, Raoul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), p. 470 (Slovakia), p. 331 (Poland).

[27] PRO FO 371/34551. In a letter to me (October 1979) Mr Cavendish-Bentinck wrote that his pre-War experience of Germany had been limited, and that he therefore disbelieved the atrocity stories in 1942–43. He added that when he visited Auschwitz in late 1945 and reported to the Foreign Office that millions of people had been killed there, it was *still* not believed in the Foreign Office.

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sions." Whom could it embarrass? It was believed in London and Washington that stories like these would at best sidetrack the Allies from the War effort; it was argued (by the head of the Southern Department of the Foreign Office in September 1944) that it would compel various heads of offices "to waste a disproportionate amount of their time in dealing with wailing Jews."

4. *Diplomats & Decrypts*

AS THE RIEGNER REPORT reached London, a senior British official noted that "we have, of course, received numerous reports of large-scale massacres of Jews, particularly in Poland."[28]

Where did these "numerous reports" originate? Some came from the usual intelligence sources, others from prisoners-of-war who had succeeded in escaping from the Continent and had accidentally witnessed such scenes. One of the escapees who later became famous was Airey Neave (a prominent Tory parliamentarian who was killed by Irish terrorists on the premises of the House of Commons in 1979). He had witnessed the early stage of "the Final Solution" in Poland. A British officer who had been hiding in Warsaw and escaped in early June of 1942 was said to be the source of an OSS report from Lisbon.

Some reports came through ordinary diplomatic channels. Thus David Kelly (head of the British Legation in Switzerland, in a letter dated 19 November 1941 to Frank Roberts of the Central Department of the Foreign Office):

> "Here are a few miscellaneous items I have just heard from colleagues. The Pole told me . . . that 1½ million Jews who were living in Eastern (recently Russian) Poland have simply disappeared altogether; nobody knows how and where."[29]

The forwarded report is of considerable interest. It is one of the first, if not the very first, indication that news of the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* had reached the West and also the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jews had been killed. The source was Alexander Lados, the Polish diplomatic representative in Berne. He was neither a naive man nor a sensationalist; he had been Minister of the Interior in the government-in-exile before moving to Switzerland. He had no radio contact with Poland, so the information could have reached him only through a Polish courier on his way to the West. The news was substantially correct—one-and-a-half million Jews had lived in the territories occupied by the Germans since the invasion; those who had not escaped had been killed. There were other such reports from various sources.

BUT THERE WERE, in addition, two other major sources of information: one highly secret, the other quite open. The secret story of the *Enigma* decrypts (*Ultra*, *Triangle*) became gradually known during the 1970s. Throughout much of the War British intelligence was able to intercept internal radio signals inside Nazi Germany and to read them. In the headquarters of this operation in Bletchley which employed thousands of people, the *Luftwaffe* code was first deciphered and subsequently other codes; the *SS* code was broken in late 1941 and also that of the *Abwehr*. Many studies of the Second World War which did not take this into account will certainly have to be rewritten, for it does make a difference whether Army, Navy or Air Force commanders, facing basic decisions, were quite reliably informed about the strength of the other side and its intentions. True, much vital information was not transmitted by wireless telegraphy but by telephone, teleprinter, or courier (always preferred over shorter distances). Thus communication between Berlin and Madrid was by wireless and could be read—whereas the letters exchanged between Berlin and Paris could not be intercepted.

British Intelligence could have known about "the Final Solution" through the *Enigma* decrypts. But did it? It will not be possible to provide a conclusive answer to this question for a long time. Many *Ultra* signals have been released in recent years but almost exclusively concern naval and air operations, and these too are incomplete. Material pertaining to *Wehrmacht* and *SS* Intelligence is not accessible so far, and some of it may never be released. The same refers to US decrypts; Britain was not the only country to intercept German radio communications in Eastern Europe during the War. Thus the evidence available is incomplete and indirect, and it must be analysed in terms of probability rather than certainty.

THE *SS* CODE was broken by British Intelligence, but most of the signals read in Bletchley apparently dealt with foreign intelligence, and not with "the Final Solution." I have been assured that those reading the cables to and from the chief state-security office (RSHA) learned, in fact, about the mass murder of Jews from MI6 sources.[30] Up to 1943, when a computer was installed, only a relatively small part of the material intercepted was in fact decoded. It was a matter of hit-and-miss,

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[28] D. Allen, PRO FO 371/30917 (dated 14 August 1942).

[29] David Kelly to Frank Roberts, FO 371 26515.

[30] By, for instance, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper and Mr Peter Calvocoressi.

It is not known and probably will not be known for a

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and signals dealing neither with the military build-up nor with high-grade political intelligence were given low priorities. Information about Jews was hardly considered top priority. It has also been said that, for technical reasons, reception from Eastern Europe was uncertain. But this did not prevent *Ultra*, in the spring of 1941, from collecting important evidence about the invasion build-up of the German Army and Air Force against the Soviet Union in Poland.

Did the *SS Einsatzgruppen* actually use wireless for their progress reports? This question can be answered in the affirmative. The *Einsatzgruppen* reports state that they used not only teleprinter but also radio stations. Operation Report 131 (dated 10 April 1942) announces, for instance, that *Einsatzgruppen* A and B used Radio Smolensk; Group 6, Stalino; 7A Klinzy and Orel; 9 Witebsk; 10 Feodosia; 12 Federowka. Radio stations at Kiev, Charkow, Nikolaev, and Simferopol were also used.

There was, in any case, yet another source of information which had a direct bearing on "the Final Solution." British Intelligence was closely analysing on a daily basis the movements of German trains. There was a special "Railway Research Service" at the Ministry of Economic Warfare, which, with the help of *Enigma*, broke the German railway code in February 1941. At the same time, quite independently, SIS also discovered the code and this made it possible to follow the movement of German trains all over Europe.[31] Railway Intelligence was, of course, especially interested in irregular patterns; and the trains carrying the Jews to Poland, and inside Poland to the concentration camps, cannot have escaped their attention. If German railway staff reached the conclusion that Auschwitz had become one of Europe's most important and populous centres in view of the many trains directed there, the same thought must also have occurred to Allied Intelligence.

Was it perhaps a place of great importance for Hitler's War effort? Quite probably, therefore, an effort was made to find out more about what, if anything, was being produced in Auschwitz and the other camps. Such studies were probably undertaken, but they have not been declassified.

Was information concerning the extermination of European Jewry suppressed by the Intelligence Services? The answer seems to be yes, but in view of the fact that many of the files of these services have been destroyed, it may not be possible to prove conclusively whether this was indeed the case, and if so, for what reason. This is not to question the integrity of those Intelligence officers who in later years have denied all knowledge. As Churchill once observed: memories of war should never be trusted without verification. But verification has been made impossible in this case.

5. *The Facts Slip Through*

THERE WERE OTHER SOURCES of information on which one can report with greater certainty.

Unlike the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany was not a hermetically closed country, even in Wartime. Tens of thousands of foreign citizens continued to live and to travel in Germany and some of them also went to the occupied territories in the East. North and South American diplomats and journalists (with the exception of Argentina and Chile) left Germany in January 1942; but there were still the neutrals such as Spain and Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, Ireland and Turkey, and, of course, Germany's allies and satellites. They had embassies in Berlin and there were many local consular offices (Sweden had 53 such offices, Finland 32, Denmark 30, even Portugal had 20). Many of these consuls were German citizens, but those in key posts (such as Hamburg, Prague, or Vienna) were usually foreign nationals; Swiss consuls were always Swiss citizens.

It was not the main assignment of consular officers to provide political intelligence; but they would not be reprimanded for picking up and passing on gossip and news items. (One example: a Swiss citizen who had by accident witnessed a massacre in Ukraine did inform his consul in Hamburg.) Consuls would extend help to citizens of the countries they represented. Among these citizens there would invariably be some Jews, who foolishly had stayed on in Germany. There were others, whose claims were shaky (widows or descendants of Turkish or Spanish citizens). But investigations had to be made in each case; and thus diplomatic and consular personnel were bound to learn that

long time by whom and in what circumstances the *SS* code was broken. We do know, however, that the Polish Second Bureau had deciphered the *SD* code and was regularly reading it well before the outbreak of the Second World War. This has been described in some detail in the memoirs of the head of this task force, Marian Rejewski, a gifted mathematician (Marian Rejewski, *Wspomnienia o mej pracy w Biurze Szyfrow Oddzialu II w latach 1930–1945*, unpublished, Warsaw, Military Historical Institute). See Richard S. Woytak, *On the Border of War and Peace; Polish Intelligence and Diplomacy in 1937–1939 and the origins of the Ultra Secret* (New York, 1979), p. 101.

It is quite likely that the *SD* code was changed after August 1939. But we do not know whether it was changed radically; and for this reason it cannot be said with any certainty whether the British services simply continued where the Poles had stopped in 1939 or whether a major new effort was needed to break it. All that matters in this context is that the *SS–SD* codes could be read in Britain by late 1941.

[31] F. H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence...*, pp. 357–58. Documents pertaining to *Ultra* railway intelligence are not yet accessible at the Public Record Office.

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Jews were being deported, that their property was being seized, that they were disappearing without trace. When two of the secretaries at the Turkish Embassy in Berlin (who happened to be Jewish) suddenly vanished—or when a similar lot befell the German-language teacher of the Ambassador of Siam in Berlin—questions would be asked.

There were many ways in which foreign nationals living in the *Reich* might learn about the fate of the Jews. Thus Goebbels in one of his staff conferences (on 11 March 1941) mentioned with evident indignation that he had just learned that half the foreign students in Berlin were staying in "Jewish apartments."

The Finnish Ambassador, Professor Kiwimaeki, was a personal friend of Felix Kersten, Himmler's masseur (and one of the best informed people in the *Reich*). Kiwimaeki was warned by Kersten in July 1942 that Himmler wanted the Finns to surrender their Jews.

The Swedes received information from a variety of sources; it was a Swedish diplomat, Baron von Otter, who was approached by Kurt Gerstein in the Warsaw-Berlin express. Gerstein, as Chief Disinfection Officer of the *Waffen SS*, was in charge of supplying the poison to the camps. He had just returned from an inspection tour attending to technical details such as the relative advantages of *Zyklon B* (hydrogen cyanide) and carbon monoxide in killing people and he told Baron von Otter, who informed Stockholm.[32]

This was an accidental meeting, but others were routine. The Swedish Embassy's pastor was in constant touch with oppositionist elements in the German Protestant Church and tried, unsuccessfully, to rescue some of the converted Christians (for instance, the adopted daughter of Jochen Klepper, a well-known author). Counsellor Almquist of the Embassy also participated in these rescue attempts. Swedish businessmen in Warsaw were in touch with the Polish underground (and some were arrested). Swedish diplomats were bound to learn about the mortal danger facing the Jews. It is unlikely, to put it mildly, that they (and other neutral representatives in Berlin, which sometimes included even Germany's allies, such as Italy and Hungary) would have gone out of their way to try to prevent the enforced journey of a Jew from Germany or Holland or France to some East European destination unless they knew that deportation was a sentence of death.[33] Only a very few, such as Baron von Otter, had received a briefing on the technology of mass murder. But these were technical details; about the end result there was no doubt.

THE DIPLOMATS constituted only a small part of the foreign community in Wartime Germany. Even after the exodus of the American journalists in December 1941 there were still some hundred foreign journalists stationed in Nazi Germany. Their number slightly increased in 1942–43 and it was only during the last year of the War, when the lines of communication broke down, that many of them left. The majority came from "satellite" countries, which is not to say that they were always enthusiastic about Nazi politics. There were also quite a few correspondents from neutral countries. The main Swiss newspapers were represented, and *Svenska Dagbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Stockholm Tidningen, Nya Daglight Allehande* and even *Socialdemokraten* had permanent Berlin correspondents. Their reports were, of course, strictly censored but this does not mean that they did not know more than what was written for publication.

NAZI OFFICIALS were not always capable of keeping even top secrets. Thus Professor Karl Boehme, head of the foreign press department of the Ministry of Propaganda, announced at a reception at the Bulgarian Embassy—in May 1941—that he would "soon" be *Gauleiter* of the Crimea. (Following this incident he was indeed sent to the Eastern front—but as a soldier, and it was only owing to Goebbels' personal intervention that he was not shot.) If military secrets of this importance were accidentally revealed, "the Final Solution" was more widely discussed and commented upon. True, foreign correspondents were not permitted to

[32] Personal communication from Baron von Otter, (25 August 1979). Otter at first composed a report about the meeting but then decided not to mail it since he was to return to Stockholm within a week after the event. Interviewed in 1979, von Otter said that it was a "totally unique situation. I was the first diplomat to find out what was happening in Germany. . . ." What if his superiors had passed on the report to the Allies and the Allies had made the facts known? Otter thinks that the German people would not have believed it, and in any case "it was in an iron grip" (*Aftonbladet*, 7 March 1979). Soederblom, the head of the political department in the Foreign Ministry, to whom von Otter reported, said that "we judged it too risky to pass on information from one belligerent country to another" (*Aftonbladet*, 8 March 1979). Was no credence given to the information? or wasn't it considered of sufficient importance to pass on to the Allies? The explanation that it was "too risky" can hardly be taken seriously: there were ways and means to transmit the information without implicating the Swedish government. I am grateful to the Swedish Foreign Ministry for having given me access to the hitherto closed file in February 1980. The result was negative; it contained hardly anything that was not known before.

[33] Dr Hans Lindberg, author of a study of Swedish refugee policy from 1936–41, believes that it is unlikely that the Swedish authorities knew about the mass murders prior to Baron von Otter's report. He bases this belief on an interview with Ambassador Gosta Engzell, who was then in a key position in the Swedish Foreign Ministry. See Hans Lindberg, *Svensk flyktingpolitik under internationnellt tryck 1936–41* (Stockholm, 1973).

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travel freely in Eastern Europe during the War, but there were still guided tours for both resident journalists and those specially invited. Thus, a group was taken to Kiev in October 1941 to see the destruction wrought by the Bolsheviks. Captain Koch, who was in charge of them, was asked about the murder of many thousands of Jews in the Ukrainian capital—this was merely a few days after Babi Yar. He denied all knowledge whereupon the journalists, according to an *Abwehr* report, told him that they knew about it anyway ("*dass sie darueber doch genau Bescheid wuessten*").[34] Journalists could not print such stories, but they talked about them; most of them went on home leave quite frequently and would inform their editorial offices, families, friends.

Albert Mueller (foreign editor of the *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* from 1934 to 1965) wrote in retrospect that there was no "direct news" but that the deportations and the concentration in ghettos were impossible without announcements in the German press in occupied Poland which was read by the foreign correspondents in Berlin. "We received no picture of photographic exactitude, only silhouettes. . . ."[35] But the silhouettes were quite revealing, and Mueller also remembers the information he received early on in the War from an unimpeachable source, a lawyer and reserve officer stationed then in the Warthegau (the Polish region annexed by Germany in late 1939), about the mass graves for Jewish victims. The officer added in his message that the incident was less uncommon than the fact that it had reached his courtroom at all. On another occasion the Dutch government-in-exile informed Mueller and his colleagues that the central register office in Amsterdam had been destroyed by the Resistance because of certain indications that there were in Poland installations for mass murder (or that these were about to be completed).

The neutrals in Wartime Germany were, thus, another important channel through which the Allied Governments learned about conditions in the Nazi-occupied countries and also about the fate of the Jews. Some of the neutrals reported to British and American connections (just as, for instance, some of the Spanish diplomats stationed in London passed on information to Berlin). But even those who had no direct Allied connections reported to their superiors in Stockholm, Berne, and other capitals; they talked to their friends, colleagues, and business associates. "Gossip" of this kind could be picked up by Allied diplomats and agents in the neutral capitals.

Letters sent out of Germany and neutral countries were read with attention in various Allied censorship offices. Read in conjunction with press and news agency reports, they were an important source of information. A Foreign Office report on *Conditions in Germany and Occupied Countries* (dated 18 February 1942 and based entirely on material of this sort) noted "a ruthless new drive to clear the *Reich* of the Jews." A large proportion of the Red Cross postal messages out of Germany during January 1942 "were from unfortunates on the eve of their departure to Poland or unknown destinations." There were exact data about many cities. As regards the conditions awaiting the deportees it was said that direct information was not easy to come by—an obvious understatement. But it was also stated that "rumours leaking through into Germany are reported to have caused a number of Jews to prefer suicide to deportation" (letter from Lugano, 9 January 1942). From America there came a "horror story" of thousands of the inmates of a ghetto somewhere near the Russian front being put to death in an attempt by the authorities to stamp out typhoid. Such reports were periodically put together; they show that much of interest could be culled from seemingly unpromising sources.[36]

6. *Knowing & Not Knowing*

INFORMATION ABOUT MASS MURDER was available in London by late summer of 1942, but no great publicity was given to it. The decision to play down the news is not of direct relevance here, for it belongs to the general political and moral problem of Allied reactions. But the issue cannot be bypassed altogether, for if the information about "the Final Solution" had been publicised more widely, more people in occupied Europe would have heard about it, and earlier at that. The role of the British Ministry of Information, headed at the time by Brendan Bracken, remains to be explored in this connection. I have been assured by some who worked with him and knew him well that he believed that the news was so "horrific" that it would be discounted as a propaganda lie of Goebbelsian dimensions. He did chair a press conference in July 1942 arranged by the Polish government in London, and spoke with horror and indignation about the atrocities committed against the Jews. He also declared that retribution would be administered when victory was won. But there was also the consideration that, politically, it would be unwise to give too much publicity to this specific Nazi crime.

The planning committee of the Ministry of Infor-

[34] Lahusen report on trip to Russia, NOKW 3147, 23 October 1941.

[35] *Neue Zuercher Zeitung*, 5 May 1979.

[36] PRO FO 371/30898. Censorship reports will not be declassified in Britain for another fifty years. The one quoted above reached me by accident. It shows that these reports were a source of great importance.

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mation (MOI) had reached the conclusion in July 1941 that while a certain amount of horror was needed in British home propaganda, this was only to be used sparingly

> "and must always deal with the treatment of indisputably innocent people. Not with violent political opponents. And not with Jews."[37]

Why not with Jews? Were they, perhaps, not "indisputably innocent"? No, the reason was more complicated. According to the experts of MOI the public thought that people singled out as victims were probably "a bad lot." Thus, paradoxically, MOI referred in 1942 to the "holocaust of Catholics" in Europe, but to the Jews it referred only rarely and not in terms of a holocaust even after the facts about "the Final Solution" had become known.

There was a further reason. As a senior official of MOI wrote at the time, for 20 years between the two World Wars there had been an effective campaign against atrocity stories and some people had become contra-suggestible. He, personally, did not know whether there was a "corpse factory" or not, but most people believed there was not.[38]

The same argument was quite frequently used in the United States. When John Pehle, director of the War Refugee Board, wanted to publish the Auschwitz report of two escaped prisoners in 1944, Elmer Davis (head of the Office of War Information) protested. Publishing these reports would be counter-productive; the American public would not believe them, would only consider them World-War-One-style atrocity stories. But the OWI pundits also used the opposite argument. In Occupied Europe the truth about "the Final Solution" *would* be believed, and this would strike such mortal fear into the hearts of the non-Jews that all resistance to the Nazis would collapse.

There was a third argument, and it was probably the decisive one. There is, in the words of the historian of MOI,[39] a complete absence of minutes and memoranda relating to this issue, but he is in no doubt that

> "the Ministry almost certainly hesitated because of the widely reported prejudice in the British Community against the Jews."

Anti-Semitism figured throughout 1940 and 1941 in many issues of the *Home Intelligence Weekly Report*. For unknown reasons there were much fewer such reports during the second half of 1942; but then, towards the end of the year, "anti-Semitism appears actually to have been revived by the authoritative disclosures of the Nazis' systematic massacres of the European Jews." The *Weekly Reports* of 8 and 15 December 1942 announced extreme horror, indignation, anger, and disgust. But in the *Weekly Report* of 29 December the conclusion was reached that as a result of the publicity

> "people become more conscious of the Jews they do not like here. . . ."

This, then, was undoubtedly the main reason for playing down the murder of the Jews. MOI used this argument with regard to the home services of the British Broadcasting Corporation; the intelligence services and the Foreign Office used similar reasons with regard to the BBC's European services.

PWE (Political Warfare Executive) was certainly well informed about "the Final Solution." In its headquarters at Electra House in London it not only received relevant items from all other British intelligence services, but it had a group of 30 analysts at the British Embassy in Stockholm reading all newspapers from Axis and neutral countries. Once a week a special RAF plane would fly the material to London. But PWE was equally uneasy about the use of "the Jewish theme" in leaflets dropped over the Continent or in broadcasts. Even towards the end of the War Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart (director of PWE) explained to a fellow British diplomat that it was quite pointless to intensify the appeals to save the doomed Jews; such declarations would only result in increased maltreatment. Furthermore paper, planes, and broadcasting hours were limited, and PWE had many other commitments. Whatever the reasons—and there were at least half-a-dozen differing arguments—the conclusion was always the same. No one in the West suggested suppressing the information about the mass murder altogether (and, in any case, the control of institutions such as MOI and PWE over the media was far from absolute). But the official consensus was to refer to it only sparingly.[40]

IN OCTOBER 1942 the Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned of the Riegner cable and published its gist without attribution. In November Rabbi Stephen Wise was asked to come to Washington, and he was told by Sumner Welles that additional information received by the State Department confirmed the deepest fears, thus releasing him from

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[37] MOI Memorandum (25 July 1941), INF 1/251.

[38] MOI Memorandum, R. Frazer (10 February 1942), INF 1/251.

[39] Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (London, 1979), pp. 164–66.

[40] The editorial writers of the leading British newspapers were certainly less hesitant than the bureaucrats at the time. There were strong, detailed and frequent editorial comments in *The Times*, *The Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph* and other daily newspapers throughout December 1942.

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silence. He told a press conference in Washington that he had learned through sources confirmed by the State Department that half of the estimated four million Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe had been slain in an "extermination campaign." [41]

On 17 December 1942 the eleven Allied governments and De Gaulle's Free France Committee published a common declaration which announced that the German authorities were now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention of exterminating the Jewish people in Europe. This was followed by editorials, broadcasts, and public meetings. There seemed to be no more doubt about the authenticity of the terrible news.

But on 10 February 1943 after Leland Harrison, the US minister to Switzerland, had forwarded yet another message from Dr Riegner on "the Final Solution" he was asked by Breckinridge Long (Assistant Secretary in charge of the Special War Problems Division) no longer to accept and transmit such reports to private persons in the United States.[42] There were influential circles in Washington who did not want reports of this kind to be circulated. They felt even more strongly than their colleagues in the British Foreign Office that these reports could have "embarrassing" repercussions.

Or could it still be that attitudes were motivated by genuine doubts about the veracity of the "horror stories?" News about Nazi atrocities had been widely published in the American press from 1939 onwards. Commenting on some of these reports, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an editorial (5 December 1941):

> "the sum of it all indicates that the fate reserved for the Jews by the Nazis is worse than a status of serfdom—it is nothing less than systematic extermination."

During the first six months of 1942 there were reports of mass executions, and all the important messages coming out of Poland were also published. US embassies in Budapest and Bucharest reported the Kamenets-Podolsk massacre and the deportation to Transniestria. The cables on these events by Franklin M. Gunther (US Ambassador to Bulgaria) apparently created some displeasure in the Department; but all that matters in this context is that the relevant information was available in Washington. US diplomatic personnel were still stationed in the Axis countries up to the end of 1941, and in Vichy for a year after; Jewish institutions furthermore provided a steady stream of information. The files of the Department of State are full of such material: information, queries, appeals for help, suggestions for action, protests.

As early as 7 October 1941 Ray Atherton of the European Division of the State Department had sent a 60-page memorandum, "Poland under German Occupation" to Colonel William (Bill) Donovan, at that time still "Coordinator of Information." A member of the US Embassy in Berlin, who had formerly served in Warsaw, had received this document from a Pole. It described conditions in Poland before the German invasion of the Soviet Union and said that it was the endeavour of the German authorities in Poland to "ruthlessly and entirely exterminate the Jewish element from the life of Aryan communities." Terms such as "extermination... elimination... liquidation" were repeatedly used, and it was stressed that Nazi policy was to make the Jews disappear from Europe.[43] While reports such as these did not specifically refer to physical extermination, they left little to the imagination. A long signal (Lisbon, 20 July 1942) begins as follows:

> "Germany no longer persecutes the Jews, it is systematically exterminating them.... These facts moreover have been corroborated by many returning citizens of European origin now here."[44]

But were these reports read in Washington? When, three months later, Professor Felix Frankfurter voiced his apprehension about the fate of the Jews to President Roosevelt he was told not to worry—the deported Jews were simply being employed on the Soviet frontier to build fortifications....[45]

Roosevelt most certainly did not read every single intelligence report from Eastern Europe. But it is equally certain that he knew more than he admitted to Felix Frankfurter on 16 September 1942. One month before (on 22 August) he had said in a White House press conference:

> "the communication which I have just received ... gives rise to the fear that as the defeat of the enemy countries approaches, the barbaric and unrelenting character of the occupational régime will become more marked and may even lead to the extermination of certain populations."

WHO WERE THE "certain populations"? Certainly not the people of the Netherlands and Luxembourg, from whose governments-in-exile he had received the information.

Roosevelt's general attitude was perhaps most

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[41] *New York Herald Tribune*, 25 November 1942.

[42] Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue* (New Brunswick, 1970), p. 180.

[43] NND 750140. The document is of considerable interest because it is the first detailed statement on the situation in Occupied Poland prepared by the Polish underground.

[44] N.A. Records of OSS, 26896. This report is identical with information received by Richard Lichtheim in Geneva and forwarded by him to Jerusalem.

[45] Stephen S. Wise papers, Frankfurter to Wise (16 September 1942).

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succinctly stated in a reply to a letter from General Sikorski early in July 1942. The Polish chief-of-state had suggested drastic action as a deterrent against German terrorism. Roosevelt said that he was fully aware of these actions but there was no answer except the crushing of the military might of the Axis powers. America was deeply incensed about the barbaric behaviour of the Nazis, but it would not stand for acts of retaliation such as the indiscriminate bombing of the civilian population of enemy countries.[46]

Roosevelt was kept fully informed by, among others, long cables from A. Drexel Biddle, Ambassador with the exiled governments in London and a personal friend. But given his belief that the only politically and strategically sound course was "the most effective prosecution of the war" he did not pay attention to the news about "the Final Solution", and he may even have considered it inopportune.

Another report, probably from the same source, begins with a discussion of the chronology of "the Final Solution":

> "The exact date when Hitler decided to wipe the Jews from the surface of Europe in the most literal sense of the word, namely by killing them, is unknown. Evacuations and deportations accompanied by executions date as far back as the Polish campaign, but the organised wholesale slaughter of whole communities and trainloads of Jews appears to have been practised not before the German attack on Russia."[47]

It ends with the destruction of the working of gassing vans outside Minsk.

The OSS report just quoted was by no means the only one. One of the first on "the systematic liquidation of the Jews" is dated 14 March 1942, but some leading OSS officials had known, and written about it, even before. One of them was Fred Oechsner, formerly head of the United Press Bureau in Berlin, who went on to cover the war in the East with the German and Rumanian army and had been to Odessa and other places. He reported in October 1941 from German sources about the special treatment of the Jews in Kiev, Zhitomir, Kherson and other places ("the Ukrainians took care of matters"). Major Arthur Goldberg, who worked for the OSS in London, was given details about "the Final Solution" by Shmuel Zygielbojm and passed the information on to Washington.[48]

THE BEST-INFORMED AMERICAN on things German in 1941–42 was probably the legendary Sam Woods (1892–1953), commercial attaché in Berlin and later, from early 1943 Consul General in Zurich. A Texan who knew no German and pretended not to have the slightest interest in politics, Woods engaged with great success in freebooting intelligence activities outside any organisational framework. In Berlin in February 1941 he received a copy of the German battle order for *Barbarossa*, and later in Zurich he received information that the Germans were debating whether to work on the atomic bomb—to mention only two of his major scoops. There is reason to assume that Woods knew from his German contacts about the fate of the Jews; but since, more often than not, he conveyed his information to his superiors by word of mouth, it is doubtful whether this will ever be proven.[49] The Germans apparently never suspected Woods during his Berlin period (1937–41); they became interested in him only after his appointment in Zurich.

In another account a soldier of the Italian Expeditionary Force to Russia is quoted: "God will chastise us terribly for the assistance we render to all these crimes." A report dated August 1942 was a copy of a message sent to Rabbi Stephen Wise and intercepted by the US authorities:

> "There is hardly a Jew to be found in the whole of Eastern Poland, including occupied

[46] General Sikorski's letter is dated 22 June 1942, Roosevelt's answer 3 July. These documents as well as the cables emanating from A. Drexel Biddle can be found in National Archives, record group 84, Warsaw 1942, file 711–Jewish atrocities.

[47] RG 226, *OSS* 27275.

[48] OSS, R & A. Nr. 605; *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 October 1941 (Oechsner dispatch). Richard Helms had worked for Fred Oechsner at the Berlin United Press bureau; when Oechsner joined OSS he enlisted Helms for the organisation.

Arthur J. Goldberg, subsequently a Supreme Court Justice and US representative to the United Nations, was asked in late August of 1942, by General William Donovan whose special assistant he was, to organise a London office of the Labor Division of the OSS which Goldberg directed. Adolph Held, president of the Jewish Labor Committee, suggested Shmuel Zygielbojm as one of several useful contacts. The two became friends in autumn 1942; they met both officially and socially.

> "In the course of these meetings Mr. Zygielbojm informed me about Hitler's program for the 'final solution'. He also provided me with evidence supporting the information he furnished. I forwarded this information to General Donovan through OSS channels. At this point my memory becomes faulty. I believe that he not only advised me about the death camps but also about the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto and requested either a bombing of Auschwitz and/or the Warsaw ghetto.... I recall that upon receiving an answer to my urging that his request be honored and that it was negative, I asked him to have dinner with me at Claridges where I was staying. With understandable pain and anguish I told him that our government was not prepared to do what he requested because in the view of our high command, aircraft were not available for this purpose. The next day he committed suicide—this I recall vividly...."
>
> (Letter to author, 15 November 1979).

[49] Since writing these lines I have been able to unearth much more evidence on Sam Woods and his sources of information (thanks to Ruben Hecht, then of Basle, now residing in Haifa, who worked closely with Woods during the War). Woods did get and transmit such information.

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> Russia . . . . The Jews deported from Germany, Belgium, Holland, France, and Slovakia are to be slaughtered. . . . Since this slaughter would attract greater attention in the West, the Jews must first be deported to the East, where other countries are less likely to learn of it."

Reports from French officers (who escaped or were repatriated from prisoner-of-war camps in Poland) as well as from M. Charles Mercier (a Red Cross representative) mention not only "*choses incroyables sur les massacres des Juifs*" but also concrete details such as the extermination of the whole Jewish population of the town of Rawa Ruska.[50] Yet another message says that "Jews in the East not excluding Eastern Galicia and Lwow are being systematically murdered. There are none left in the larger Soviet Ukrainian towns, in Lithuania they will be soon completely exterminated."[51] A signal datelined "German frontier—15 November, 1942", probably based on the report of a journalist, deals with the murder of Jews in the Baltic countries and says that the procedure will serve as an example elsewhere.[52] Lastly, the OSS received, through liaison officers, much information from Polish sources in London. Reports dated August and September 1942 included details about camps such as Treblinka as well as Polish and German eye-witness accounts.

IN THE LIGHT OF THESE and other reports, published and secret, one would assume that not only the US Intelligence community and officials of the State Department, but also average newspaper-readers, were aware, as 1942 drew to its close, that the Jews of Europe were being systematically exterminated. But this was by no means the case, and while one can think of various explanations the reasons still remain something of a riddle.

President Roosevelt may have been too busy to study the newspapers in great detail, and he was certainly a less avid reader of intelligence reports than Winston Churchill. But what about the diplomats and the Intelligence agents in the field?

Two examples should suffice.

On 5 April 1943, Herschel Johnson, US Ambassador to Sweden, sent a cable to Washington in which he reported that of the 450,000 Jews in Warsaw only 50,000 remained. There were some incorrect details in his cable: the stories about the lethal methods used (gas) were said to be a distortion of the facts, for the Jews had all been killed by German army firing-squads and some of the German soldiers had revolted. This report is remarkable, however, for a very different reason. By April 1943 the great majority of Polish—and European—Jewry was dead. Ambassador Johnson surely must have been aware of the fact. An experienced diplomat, he was serving at the time in one of the most exposed and most interesting listening-posts as far as Nazi-occupied Europe was concerned. He had read, no doubt, about the fate of the Jews in the American press; he had seen translations from the Swedish press. The year before he had sent a cable to Washington about the destruction of Baltic and Ukrainian Jewry. Yet he ended his cable of April 1943 with the following words:

> "So fantastic is the story told by this German eyewitness to his friend, my informant, that I hesitate to make it the subject of an official report."[53]

It is possible, though not very likely, that the news from Poland had somehow by-passed the US Ambassador to Sweden.

BUT NO ONE WAS better informed during these years about events inside Nazi-occupied Europe than Allen Dulles, representing the OSS in Berne—which makes the incident which took place in June 1944 all the more difficult to explain.

Two inmates of Auschwitz, Vrba and Wetzler, had succeeded in escaping to Slovakia and wrote a long and detailed report about their experiences which later became famous and was widely circulated by the US War Refugee Board. The report contained many new details but all the essential facts had, of course, been known for a long time. The report was taken by a courier to Budapest and from there to Switzerland. Garrett (the representative of the British news agency, Exchange Telegraph) received a copy which he took to Allen Dulles on 22 June 1944. Dulles read it in his presence:

> "He was profoundly shocked. He was as disconcerted as I was and said: 'One has to do something immediately'. . . ."[54]

A cable was sent by Dulles to the Secretary of State the following day. Eighteen months earlier the *New York Times* and other American newspapers had repeatedly featured news items such as TWO THIRDS OF JEWS IN POLAND HELD SLAIN—ONLY 1,250,000 SAID TO SURVIVE OF 3,500,000 ONCE

[50] OSS 88254. The Research and Analysis department of OSS concluded as early as March 1942 that "the pattern of German violence includes the systematic liquidation of Jews" (Report 605, 14 March 1942).

[51] OSS 24736.

[52] OSS 24728.

[53] Herschel Johnson to Secretary of State (Stockholm, 5 April 1943).

[54] Werner Rings, *Advokaten des Feindes* (Duesseldorf, 1966).

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THERE.[55] Even if it is assumed that not a single additional Jew had been slain since December 1942, it is impossible to understand Allen Dulles's surprise and shock.

WHAT EMERGES from these and similar incidents is that the process of perception and learning is more complex than commonly assumed. The fact that some information has been mentioned once—or even a hundred times—in secret reports or in mass-circulation newspapers does not necessarily mean that it has been accepted and understood. Big figures become statistics, and statistics have no psychological impact. Some thought that the news about the Jewish tragedy was exaggerated; others did not doubt the information, but had different priorities and preoccupations.

A moving interpretation based on personal experience has been given by W. A. Visser 't Hooft (a Protestant theologian and the first secretary of the World Council of Churches), who spent the War years in Switzerland. He had received, in October 1941, alarming reports about the deportation of Jews from Germany and other occupied countries to Poland—but, writing 30 years later, he noted that it took several months before the information received entered his consciousness.

> "That moment occurred when I heard a young Swiss businessman tell what he had seen with his own eyes during a business trip to Russia. He had been invited by German officers to be present at one of the mass killings of Jews. He told us in the most straightforward and realistic way how group after group of Jewish men, women and children were forced to lie down in the mass graves and were then machine-gunned to death. The picture he drew has remained in my mind ever since. From that moment onward I had no longer any excuse for shutting my mind to information which could find no place in my view of the world and humanity."

Why, in the view of this prominent churchman, did the outside world remain indifferent? Was it because the victims were Jews?

> "I do not underestimate the reality of such anti-Semitism but I have found little evidence that this played the main role in this situation. It was rather that people could find no place in their consciousness for such an unimaginable horror and that they did not have the imagination, together with the courage to face it. It is possible to live in a twilight between knowing and not knowing. . . ."[56]

I will attempt to explain, in my forthcoming book, why even the Jews in Europe and America were incapable of grasping, comprehending, registering the horror. The whole question of why the information was not believed is one of the riddles that make understanding the catastrophe so difficult. The rejection of information which for one reason or another is unacceptable may well be a normal psychological mechanism, at least up to a point. But beyond that point, when the veracity of the information becomes incontrovertible, continued resistance to it becomes almost inexplicable—all the more so when the events concerned are not of marginal importance or occurring in some faraway country, but constitute mortal danger to the survival of one's people or oneself.

But the case of such a remarkable spirit as Richard Lichtheim must always be excepted. He reported the exterminations in 1942, estimated with horror that almost the entire Jewish people was being destroyed, and wrote in October 1942, ". . . It is my painful duty to tell you what I know. There is nothing I could add. The tragedy is too great for words. . . ."[57]

ALL THE EVIDENCE shows that news of "the Final Solution" had been received in 1942 all over Europe, even though many details were not yet known. If so, why were the signals so frequently misunderstood or ignored?

Neither the United States Government nor Britain or Stalin showed any pronounced interest in the fate of the Jews. The information was known not only to the chiefs of Intelligence but also to leading foreign affairs and defence officials and, to a considerable extent, even to the average newspaper-reader. There was no deliberate attempt to stop the flow of information on the mass killings (except in Washington, between August and December 1942). Some officials thought the information much exaggerated; others thought it of little interest. But even those who accepted the news were not to be deflected from their priorities by considerations not "directly concerned" with the War effort. Thus, "too much publicity" about the mass murders was thought to be undesirable, for it was bound to generate demands to help the Jews and this was thought to be detrimental to the War effort. Winston Churchill showed more interest in the Jewish tragedy than Franklin Roosevelt, and

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[55] *New York Times*, 4 December 1942, p.11. Two days earlier it had been said in an editorial in the same paper that "to sum up this horrible story, it is believed that 2m. European Jews have perished and that five millions are in danger of extermination."

[56] W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs* (London, 1973), pp. 165–6.

[57] Lichtheim correspondence, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

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Roosevelt more than Joseph Stalin; but even he was not willing to devote much thought to the subject.

The impact of the news on the broad public was small and short-lived. The fact that "millions" were being killed was almost meaningless. People could perhaps identify with the fate of an individual or a family, but not with the fate of millions. The statistics of murder were dismissed from consciousness.

When the horrific reports about conditions in a mere transit camp like Bergen Belsen came in during the spring of 1945, the very last days of the War, there was surprise and shock. No one had known, no one had been prepared for this. . . .

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The departure

She had always dreaded his going, knew
That his absence would be the most complete failure,
And planned against it.

Yet when he went, her head sang, the music grew fresh
There was nothing but pleasure, and exposure was only freedom.
Without me you are a shadow: but in the departure
He proved her solid. The deprival was only song.

Things became themselves and the space and silence
Hung with all she had lost. A rain of pleasure
Fell on the emptiness and made it a singing void.
Querulous need of consorting became the half-notes
Of solitude and in the space sang and echoed
All the voices she had heard: voices of the past
(Which he had, with peremptory tone,
Determined were not to be heard)
They were as tunes to her own self.
Her feet moved without the weight of present possession
And danced in lightness of remembered self.

He came again and demanded repossession,
And suddenly she could not remember
Why he should call the tune.
The piper was hers, she played the notes of silence
And absence echoed what she most desired.

He thought that going was a move of power.
His absence was the movement of all the songs she knew.

Gay Clifford

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Vernon Scannell

War Movie Veteran

You can't tell me a thing that I don't know
About combat, son. I reckon I've seen them all
On the big screen or TV, the late-night show
Or Sunday matinee. I'm what you'd call
An old campaigner; some of them I've seen
Four-five times maybe. I've got so's I
Can tell for sure which ones among that green
Platoon of rookies are the guys to die.
You know the sensitive and quiet kid
Who can't stand rough-stuff, says his prayers at night
And never cusses? He's got to wind up dead
But not before we've seen that he can fight
And he's got guts. He ain't afraid to kill
Once the chips are down. The one to see
Turn really yellow is the loud-mouthed mother
That talks like he ain't scared of nothing, he
Will go, expendable. So will the other,
The black guy who's as good as you or me,
And the Jew that's seeking vengeance for his brother.
The comedian–the hero's buddy–could
Come through the battle in one piece or not:
He's only there for laughs, that's understood
By veterans like me. The hero's got
To be alive and kicking at the end.
The one I really like–you know the guy–
The tough top-sergeant, nobody's best friend,
His favourite meal is bullets, blood and rye;
The Krauts he's killed is anybody's guess.
He's made of steel and leather, but you'll find
That he can be the soul of gentleness
With scared old ladies, babies and the blind
Pooch whose master's been knocked off. But never
Think the guy's gone soft: back under fire
He's just as cold and murderous as ever,
He's everything a General could desire.
He'll come through safe okay.
I tell you, son,
I could write out the list of casualties
Long before the battle has begun.
I've seen it all. I know the way it is
And got to be. Well, that's what you could call
The human side, psychology I guess.
The other stuff–a cinch to learn it all
In half-a-dozen battles, maybe less.
It takes no time to get the different ranks:
Enlisted men and noncoms, officers,
The names of hardware, ammunition, tanks
And how the thing is planned. You'll think at first
That war is chaos, howl of bullet, shell
And bomb; flashes and thunder as they burst,
Flying shit, hot jig-saw bits of hell.

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Not so. It's all worked out before the start.
It's choreographed, like in a dance, okay?
You get to know the pattern. War's an art,
It's one I understand. There ain't no way
That you'll find anyone to tell you more
Than me about realities of war.

Stanislaw Baranczak

The Three Magi

They will probably come after the New Year
as always, in the early morning;
the sound of the doorbell
like forceps
will pull you out by the head
from under the bedclothes
and dazed like a newly born
you will open the door.
The star on their ID cards
will flash before your eyes;
in one of the three
with a reflex of amazement
you will recognise (isn't this a small world)
your schoolmate of years ago;
he has hardly changed since then
only he has grown a moustache
and put on a little weight, perhaps.

They will enter.
The gold of their watches will glitter (isn't
the dawn grey
today)
the smoke from their cigarettes
will swirl across the room
in strands of incense;
all that is missing is the myrrh—you will reflect half-conscious
while with your heel
you kick under the divan
a book they must not find;
what is myrrh, anyway,
one day
you must discover.

You will come with us, sir.

You will
go with them.

How white is the snow,
how black is that Fiat,
how big was the world.

Translated by Antony Graham

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UNDER WESTERN EYES

Chomsky Revisited

By Leopold Labedz

STUDENTS of casuistry should by now be familiar with Noam Chomsky's persistent efforts to prove that the earth is flat. He tries to make us believe that he is motivated in matters of Viet Nam and Cambodia by a scholarly preoccupation with facts and an intellectual "concern for truth." Fiddlesticks. Such declarations are simply a camouflage for his political passions.

How much of it is cant and plain humbug? It is difficult to say. Chomsky lives in a fantasy world in which everything which does not square with his ideological beliefs, no matter how obvious, is instantly dismissed as a product of the "Western propaganda system" and explained away with dialectical logic-chopping.

What can one make of an academic linguist who tries to use every channel in the West's free press to propagate his view that the "Free Press" (as he ironically calls it) has deliberately invented and spread the story of "the alleged genocide in Cambodia"? In this nefarious conspiracy aiming to achieve "the reconstruction of imperial ideology" in the West, collusion obviously extends from *The New York Times* to *The Wall Street Journal*, from *Le Monde* to *Le Figaro*, from *Die Zeit* to *Die Welt*.

Does he see much difference between the "Free Press" and the press in the totalitarian countries? Very little (*Working Papers*, May–June 1978):

> "In a totalitarian society the mechanics of indoctrination are simple and transparent. The state determines the official truth. The technocratic and policy-oriented intellectuals parrot official doctrine, which is easily identified. In a curious way this practice frees the mind. Internally, at least, one can identify the propaganda message and reject it.... Under capitalist democracy, the situation is considerably more complex.... The democratic system of thought control is seductive and compelling. The more vigorous the debate, the better the system of propaganda is served, since the tacit unspoken assumptions are more forcefully implanted."

That's how "the myth of genocide in Cambodia" has been established, with only a few sturdy dissident intellectuals (like Noam Chomsky, Stephen Heder, Ben Kiernan, Torben Retbøll, Laura Summers, Serge Thion, Michael Vickery, Gareth Porter, Edward S. Herman, George Hildebrand, and our own Malcolm Caldwell) seeing through the fraud. But the rest, possessing no such blessedly critical minds, have been seduced by the democratic press (*The Political Economy of Human Rights*, 1979, Vol. II, pp. 299–300):

> "The success of the Free Press in reconstructing the imperial ideology since the U.S. withdrawal from Indochina has been spectacular.... The system of brainwashing under freedom with mass media voluntary self-censorship in accord with the larger interest of the state, has worked brilliantly. The new propaganda line has been established by endless repetition of the Big Distortions...."

It is against this background that one has to look at Chomsky's latest communication (in this issue of ENCOUNTER, p. 93). For him my article "Myths & Horrors" (ENCOUNTER, February) was, of course, part of "contemporary propaganda" aimed at "reconstructing the imperial ideology" through the brainwashing of the hapless readers of these pages. How do his arguments stand up to the scrutiny of, admittedly, the perverted pen of an imperial propagandist?

CHOMSKY CLAIMS that I suppressed his "conclusion" that refugees' "reports must be considered seriously" and that I turned it "into its opposite."

This is a good example of his polemical methods: the assertion is totally false. The trick is simple, but still needs to be carefully watched. Chomsky announced the need for "serious consideration" of the refugees' reports ... but only to deny them any validity. It was a disingenuous way of providing himself with an academic alibi of "objectivity." His conclusion was exactly as I have stated it: that "the refugees from Cambodia were not to be given credence." Contrary to what he says I have correctly rendered his reasoning. I quoted one sentence (italicised below) from a paragraph which, quoted in full, should settle the matter of which of us is misleading readers about Chomsky's attitude to the evidence provided by the Cambodian refugees:

> "*They naturally tend to report what their interlocutors wish to hear.* While their reports must be considered seriously, care and caution are necessary. Specifically, refugees questioned by Westerners and Thais have a vested interest

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in reporting atrocities on the part of Cambodian revolutionaries. . . ."

Can any reader of Chomsky's letter infer from it what his real point was in his *Nation* (25 June 1977) article?

For good measure he stressed in the same passage "the extreme unreliability of refugee reports" (after "serious consideration"?) and concluded that the Cambodian "executions have numbered at most in thousands."

He presented his conclusion as based on "analysis by highly qualified specialists who have studied the full range of available evidence", dismissing such first-hand studies as the book by Father François Ponchaud. As an Australian writer has pointed out (Robert Manne in *Quadrant*, October 1979), when closely examined, these "highly qualified specialists" and their "full range of evidence" are less than impressive. Chomsky's broad body of scholarly opinion

> "boils down to an unidentified article in a fortnightly news review which has for four years affirmed constantly the Ponchaud analysis; a letter to the editor of a man who now believes that hundreds of thousands of deaths were directly caused by the actions of the Pol Pot régime; and a piece by an ideologically blinkered student [Ben Kiernan] in an undergraduate magazine."

Noam Chomsky now says that he "cited estimates ranging from thousands to hundreds of thousands and even millions killed, concluding that 'We do not pretend to know where the truth lies amidst these sharply conflicting estimates'." He also says that "there has been no 'obfuscation'" on his part.

But he now writes about "thousands *or more* killed" (*Political Economy*, Vol. II, p. 279), and yet, as noted above, he emphatically declared that the "executions numbered *at most* in thousands." He referred ironically to the "alleged human rights violations in Viet Nam" and the "alleged Khmer Rouge atrocities." He derided in general the "tales of communist atrocities." He even scoffed at *The Wall Street Journal* for having "dismissed contemptuously the very idea that the Khmer Rouge could play the constructive role." In his last book (*Political Economy*, Vol. II, p. 347) he sneers at

A Question of Sources

IN HIS Political Economy *(Vol. II, p. 343) Noam Chomsky expressed warm thanks to Ben Kiernan, a left-wing activist from Monash University in Melbourne, "for important information and very helpful comments." Approvingly he referred (pp. 226–8) to the studies on Cambodia in which Kiernan "took issue with the horror stories by refugees", questioned the assumption "that there was a central direction for atrocities", and rejected the idea "that the [Pol Pot] government planned and approved a systematic large-scale purge."*

A year later this "Australian scholar" (as Chomsky called him) has suddenly become poacher-turned-gamekeeper in the field of genocide. It happened to be the same Ben Kiernan who analysed for the New Statesman *(2 May 1980) some of the blood-chilling records brought out from Pol Pot's macabre interrogation centre at Tuol Sleng. Without mentioning his previous whitewashing of the Pol Pot régime, he wrote:*

> **"That Pol Pot ran a violent, repressive régime is something scarcely open to question."**

Nimbly confounding the issues, he dissociated himself not only from his own past, but also from Chomsky:

> **"There is a right-wing argument which suggests that Pol Pot and his friends, while ferocious, were not more so than any other rough, tough Third World government. And there is a left-wing argument—still held, apparently, by Noam Chomsky—which suggests that, although Pol Pot made numerous brutal errors, the conception of something especially outlandish about his régime is a chimera bred-up by the Western (and Vietnamese) mass-media."**

He concluded, with artless innocence, that "there was something entirely bizarre about the Pol Pot régime. Bizarre, yet disturbingly familiar in parts. . . ."

CHOMSKY IS THUS *not the only one among the dwindling band of Pol Pot apologists who is trying to extricate himself from his past and to cover up its traces. But he does so without renouncing his "outlandish" initial assertions. He may well be surprised by such a sudden turn-about of a "scholar" whom he earlier thanked so profusely for his "evidence"! Ironically, this transformation appeared just after the* New Statesman *(25 April 1980) published an enthusiastic review of Chomsky's* Political Economy*—"this may be the most important contribution to the study of American foreign policy to be published since the Vietnam War ended." A week later, the same* New Statesman *printed a special feature by Ben Kiernan and Chantou Boua: "THE BUREAUCRACY OF DEATH: DOCUMENTS FROM INSIDE POL POT'S TORTURE MACHINE", which occupied eight distinctive central pages of the magazine, with the cover and editorial pages devoted to the same subject. The decision to give it so much space was explained by reference to Santayana's saying that "those who fail to understand history may be condemned to repeat it. . . ."*

Might it not be helpful for this purpose to study the New Statesman*'s own history, and its almost unprecedented record of repetitive misunderstandings and chronic failings, from Kingsley Martin to . . . Ben Kiernan?*

L.L.

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Leo Cherne for having written in 1965 that, after American withdrawal from Viet Nam, "there will be a bloody purge of the non-Communist leaders and intellectuals." Having dismissed such a prospect in his 1973 book, *Counterrevolutionary Violence: Bloodbaths in Fact and Propaganda* (I refer to *Bains de Sang*, the French edition published by Seghers/Laffont in 1975), he is still sarcastic about "the case of the missing bloodbath" in Viet Nam (*The Nation*, 25 June 1977, and *Political Economy*, Vol. II, p. 135).

What has happened in Indochina since the "liberation" makes Chomsky's erroneous perspective painful to recollect. His contemptuous dismissal of "the bloodbath myth" as simply invented by "Washington propaganda" sounds singularly hollow today, as does his prediction that "the movement which tries to gain the support of the peasant masses will certainly not resort to a bloodbath of the rural population" (pp. 31–2 and 102–3). To rescue his earlier assertions he produces some dazzling semantic footwork, but his efforts only indicate obduracy.

HIS SENSE OF REALITY is obviously in inverse proportion to his self-righteousness. The stickler for quantitative precision now plays fast and loose with numbers and magnitudes. In 1977 he contemptuously rejected the estimated figure of 1.2 million victims. If one now divides it by his uncertainty "factor of 1,000" one obtains a figure similar to that given, apologetically, by the Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan (10,000), in his recent *Time* (10 March 1980) interview, i.e. "at most in thousands" (if we take 2 million as the basis of division, the result will be similar). But Khieu Samphan acknowledged the missing Cambodians and conveniently attributed all 2 million victims to the Vietnamese (*they* credit *him* with *3* millions). Chomsky has no such escape clause, being stuck, as he is, with his past figures and present obfuscations, for he is not prepared to admit that he was wrong. His "factor of 1,000" simply cannot be tallied with the missing Cambodians. How indignantly Noam Chomsky rejected as a fraud the press report quoting Khieu Samphan's 1976 admission of a missing million in the "liberated" Cambodia! Now he is ready even to quote the "reported" CIA estimates in preference to the figure given by an ideologically less contaminated source (William Shawcross, *The New York Review of Books*, 24 January 1980), 4–5 million surviving Cambodians out of the estimated 7-8 million before the war. In his *Language and Responsibility* Chomsky stressed the need "to look at the facts with an open mind", but his assurances that he is open-minded about the number of victims are unconvincing. Has ever an open mind been so closed to truth?

IN HIS IDEOLOGICAL fanaticism he constantly shifts his arguments and bends references, quotations and facts, while declaring his "commitment to find the truth." He excoriates the "Free Press", but when it suits his argument, he quotes it extensively. Even his ideological allies sometimes find this hard to swallow. Thus, for instance, the former editor of the radical *Ramparts*, David Horowitz, wrote critically about Chomsky in the Left-wing *Nation* (8 December 1979):

> "Consider . . . for a moment, Chomsky's misleading comparison of the Soviet and American presses as 'mirror images'. In fact the ignorance imposed on the Soviet public by Government-controlled media and official censorship is mind-boggling by Western standards. . . .
>
> Why bring this up? Why dwell on the negative features of the Soviet system (or of other Communist states) which in any case are widely reported in the American media? What is the relevance?
>
> These are questions the apologists of the Left raise when they are confronted by the Soviet case. Unfortunately, the consequences of ignoring the flaws of practical Communism are far-ranging and real. To begin with, the credibility of the Left's critique is gravely undermined. Chomsky's article is a good example. The American press does not look inordinately servile when compared with its real-world counterparts—and especially its socialist opposites."

Another Chomsky sympathiser, A. J. Langguth, was also critical of Chomsky in his review of *Political Economy* in *The Nation* (16 February 1980):

> "Is there something tinny about the Chomsky-Herman chapters on Cambodia? Perhaps it is the unrelenting insistence that they were right about Indochina and that almost everyone else was wrong. Compared to the recent articles from Shawcross, which concerned the well-being, indeed the survival of the Cambodian people, the passages from Chomsky and Herman represent a high degree of special pleading, which because of our obsession with our sins, ends up slighting the major issue—the present fate of the Cambodians."

Or, in Robert Manne's melancholy reflection:

> "Sad to say [it is not] possible to expect that the political self-confidence of the former supporters of Pol Pot will be in the slightest deflated by the fact that concerning their estimation of him and his odious régime they were wholly, shamefully and ludicrously wrong. Pol Pot has passed; Noam Chomsky, I fear, persisteth."

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He persisteth to the point where he is now denying ever having had the slightest intention of pooh-poohing the Cambodian horrors. As he put it in a previous communication to ENCOUNTER (October 1979):

> "Since authentic defenders of the Khmer Rouge were virtually impossible to find, apart from marginal Maoist groups, it has been necessary to invent them. . . . I have been elected to the post of 'official opponent', so difficult to fill."

Poor misunderstood fellow! He was only concerned with the whole truth about a situation which, as he somewhat belatedly discovered, "was grisly enough." Yet this scholarly solicitude has not met with the milk of human kindness "in the present historical context, when allegations of genocide are being used to whitewash Western imperialism, to distract attention from the 'institutionalized violence' of the expanding system of sub-fascism . . ." (*Political Economy*, Vol. II, p. 150). In such a context, he says, even the figures on the Left began "publishing outlandish falsehoods" about what he refers to as his "alleged views." Many are those among them who have fallen for the Great Imperial Hoax (Sidney H. Schanberg and William Shawcross, Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern, Jean Lacouture and Claude Roy). Unlike Noam Chomsky they have obviously not realised (p. 149) that

> "To determine the credibility of those who transmit reports is a critical matter for anyone concerned to discover the truth, either about Cambodia or about the current phase of imperial ideology."

Who is the truth-seeker, where is the ideologist? Consider Father Ponchaud and his "alleged sympathy with the Khmer peasants" which, according to his implacable critic, he invoked "for the benefit of a gullible Western audience." Chomsky called his book "serious and worth reading", but it is difficult to see why, for at the same time he denounced his "deceit", "fakery", and "outright falsehoods", and said that he "plays fast and loose with numbers and is highly unreliable with quotations" (charges which, as we have seen, apply to Chomsky himself).

It is not exactly an unknown psychological phenomenon—attributing to opponents one's own polemical sins. In Chomsky's case it always goes with high moral indignation, and also coincides with a less stringent, not to say callous, attitude to the crimes of one's own side. This type of selective morality is, as Raymond Aron observed a long time ago, a characteristic trait of *gauchistes* in general and is not confined to the apologists of Stalin alone.

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IT WOULD TAKE half a lifetime to unravel all the ploys, twists, and other mental acrobatics displayed in Chomsky's writings. Behind the extraordinary technique is a mind-set which is capable of what *The Wall Street Journal* called "intellectual levitation."

Bear with me for a few more examples. Chomsky writes in his letter:

> "Labedz claims that I criticised Western intellectuals for giving 'too much "publicity" to the Cambodian genocide', another fabrication."

Here is the editorial introductory note to "An Open Letter to Noam Chomsky" by Claude Roy published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (3 December 1979):

> "In the last issue of the review *Change* (22 March 1979), Noam Chomsky is full of irony in his conversation with Regis Débray about Western intellectuals who gave so much publicity to human rights or to the Cambodian genocide. Our friend Claude Roy finds this irony disturbing and close, very close, to bad faith."

Or take Chomsky's reference to East Timor, his standard argument (but one which, in any event, cannot justify his belittling the horrors in Cambodia). Here also his irony is misplaced: for where did he learn about the East Timor massacres but in the same "Free Press" which he so castigates?

ENCOUNTER has not been dealing with the East Timor atrocities, but it was not a case of suppression: it did not cover the Taraki-Amin massacres in Afghanistan either. Or, for that matter, those by the Mengistu régime in Ethiopia. And it came to discuss the horrors of Cambodia themselves only recently.

But whatever the omissions, it really is not a question of conspiracy of the "Free Press", as Chomsky believes. Western newspapers reported the East Timor atrocities. They condemned them with less vehemence than Chomsky, but more explicitly than he leads us to believe. Papers such as *The Wall Street Journal* (which, according to Chomsky, has a "disgraceful record of subservience to state power and apologetics for barbarism") published articles which also denounced the East Timor atrocities (George Steiner's "Thinking the Irreparable About Cambodia", 30 November 1979):

> "There are no accurate figures as to the number of men, women and children hounded, gunned, starved to death in Biafra not long ago, or being eliminated right now by Indonesian policies in East Timor. . . ."

The East Timor outrages may have deserved larger coverage and greater moral condemnation, but their extent is not comparable to those of Cambodia. They were assiduously exploited propagandistically by "progressives" who wanted to "even it up" with Cambodia. As Robert Conquest wrote (*Daily Telegraph*, 8 March 1980):

> "East Timor was until 1974 a Portuguese colony, though ethnically indistinguishable from the Indonesian part of the island. After some fighting, Freitlin, a Communist-front régime, came to power in 1975, and soon afterwards the Indonesians annexed the territory. The story of the supposed super-massacre they carried out was originally based on an administrator telling the Press that 60,000 people had lost their lives or homes (including 40,000 who had fled from the Communists). This was instantly inflated to 60,000 killed, which was gradually put up to '60,000 to 120,000'."

Chomsky now gives in his letter the figure of 100,000 to 200,000.

Professor H. W. Arndt analysed the story in detail in the Australian magazine *Quadrant* (December 1979), and summed up Noam Chomsky's evidence before the UN Decolonization Committee to the effect that

> "up to half the population of East Timor may have died and that 'the deaths from war, starvation and torture equalled or relatively exceeded those in Kampuchea'. Some Australian newspapers indulged in similarly extravagant statements."

These specious symmetries and counterpoints are nothing new in the history of *gauchisme*. When it was a question of condemning Stalin's genocide, Simone de Beauvoir wrote (in *La Force des Choses*, p. 220) in a way quite similar to Chomsky's argumentation about Cambodia and East Timor:

> "While perfectly indifferent to the 40,000 dead in Sétif, to the 80,000 assassinated in Madagascar, to the hunger and miseries of Algeria, to the burning of villages in Indochina, to the Greeks suffering in the camps, and to the Spaniards being executed by Franco, the bourgeois hearts are suddenly bleeding for the poor Soviet inmates."

The variations on this theme hark back to the time when Arthur Koestler ridiculed in *The Yogi and the Commissar* the standard "progressive" argument about Stalin's forced labour camps: "And what about the lynchings of Negroes in the South? . . ."

No doubt some horrific things happened in East Timor. But it is demagoguery on the part of Chomsky to put the "direct responsibility" for them "in Washington", as it is to say that it bears "basic responsibility" for "the current suffering in Cambodia." Pol Pot had power in Cambodia, whereas the US President did not control East Timor.

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THERE IS NO POINT getting into a numbers game, yet the judgment whether there was genocide in Cambodia or East Timor depends on the magnitude of the respective horrors. In this context, just as Chomsky tends to understate the Cambodian atrocities, so he tends to overstate the massacres in East Timor. As usual, he is not too meticulous in his handling of figures. He refers in his *Political Economy* (Vol. II, p. 139), to the "apparent massacre of something like one-sixth of the population of East Timor." In his present letter the figure becomes "roughly one-fifth of the population." In either case, his assumption of possibly 200,000 victims would make the population of East Timor far higher that it was before the atrocities took place (it was the 1974 recorded figure of 688,769 which was used by the "progressives" for the charges about the missing East Timorese). This in no way affects the question of moral condemnation, but it is relevant to his argument about genocide; although he does not admit it, the percentage of victims in Cambodia is far higher. Nor are the absolute figures in the two cases comparable: in Cambodia they go tragically into millions.

It is not true as he asserts in his letter that for me "it is an incontrovertible fact" that the population there had been reduced "from seven to four million under the Khmer Rouge régime." I did not say this: I just referred to Sidney H. Schanberg's article reporting how his Cambodian journalist friend, Dith Pran, told him about such reduction "by massacre and starvation." But never mind Chomsky's careless use of quotations, references and attributions. Like Father Ponchaud, I do not believe that we can have an exact figure; but I do believe that we can have an idea of the order of magnitude of the Cambodian tragedy, and that it is within the range of millions, not—as Chomsky believes—of "thousands." Thus it falls fully into the terrible category of genocide. Chomsky's pettifogging becomes easier to understand when one recalls that he has never attributed the responsibility for the Cambodian murders to the policies of *Angka*, the ruling organisation of the Khmer Rouge régime. By now the evidence about its nature and the extent of the Cambodian holocaust is overwhelming. The ghastly story told by Dith Pran to Sidney H. Schanberg led him to the conclusion that

> "the Khmer Rouge terror may have touched a level of cruelty not seen before in our lifetime. It was Cambodians endlessly killing other Cambodians in an orgy of destruction."
>
> *Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, 13 April 1980

The evidence is coming not only from the refugees' reports, which Chomsky so cavalierly dismissed, but also from present-day visitors to Cambodia. Chris Mullin described what he saw on the spot in the Left-wing *Tribune* (11 April 1980):

> "Visitors to Phnom Penh these days are taken on a gruesome little ritual tour of Khmer Rouge handiwork. The highlight is the Tuol Sleng prison (a converted high school) which has records listing over 16,000 inmates, of whom only five are said to have survived. . . . Of course there is no need for the visitor to believe any of this—though it is graphic enough. Instead he or she can take a car along any of the roads out of Phnom Penh. Choose any road, no one will prevent you. Drive until you want to stop at a village, any village, and ask what happened in the Pol Pot time.
>
> "I drove one day to Kros, a village 18 kilometres along the road to Battambang. The village I chose at random had a population of around 2,000 before the coming of the Khmer Rouge. Today there are just 853, mostly women."

PERHAPS THE BEST IDEA of Chomsky's warped perceptions can be gauged from his other comparisons. For instance, he contemptuously rejected any parallel between the Pol Pot régime and the Nazi régime, and declared that

> "a more appropriate comparison is with France after liberation, where 30-40,000 people were

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massacred with far less motive for revenge. . . ."
Political Economy, Vol. II, p. 149

And he also declared that, with regard to torture, Israel's "record far exceeds in brutality anything that we know of from Viet Nam" (*Palestine Human Rights Bulletin*, 30 August 1977).

The eeriness of Chomsky's "intellectual levitation" can be judged by his adroit shifts in argument whenever a factual mistake is detected in his writings.

> "When we first read Ponchaud's original, we assumed that the Thai journal *Prachachat* must be a right wing journal giving a criticism of the Khmer Rouge. That is what Ponchaud's account suggests, in particular his final ironic comment, now deleted in the American edition. We wrote in *The Nation* (25 June 1977) that the chain of transmission was too long to be taken very seriously and we raised the following question: 'How seriously would we regard a critical account of the United States in a book by a hostile European leftist based on a report in *Pravda* of a statement allegedly made by an unnamed American official?' . . . Several people (Heder, Ponchaud, Vickery) have pointed out to us that we were mistaken in assuming that *Prachachat* was a right wing newspaper critical of the Khmer Rouge. The fact is that it was a left wing newspaper and the actual text is not a criticism of the Khmer Rouge, but a defense of the Khmer Rouge against foreign criticism, something that could hardly be guessed from Ponchaud's account and is certainly worth knowing, in this context.
>
> *Political Economy*, Vol. II, pp. 263-4

Well, how does Noam Chomsky get out of his blunder? Very simple. He continues:

> "Here then, is an improved version of our original analogy: How seriously would we regard a critical account of the United States in a book by a hostile European leftist based on a report in ENCOUNTER* of comments by a 'neutral person' who reports statements of an unnamed American official?"

Having discovered the true tribal identity of *Prachachat*, Chomsky added a footnote reflecting his own tribal sympathies:

> " * Our apologies to the editors of *Prachachat* for this comparison."

Can one take seriously such political infantilism? Why does Noam Chomsky continue to write letters to ENCOUNTER?[1] Why should he want them to appear in a magazine the comparison with which is a terrible insult to an obscure pro-Pol Pot Thai journal? Why should he expect his stabbing illuminations of dangerous truths to be published in an organ of the "Western propaganda system", exercising "voluntary self-censorship in accordance with the larger interests of state"?

What is our indefatigable publicist up to? And what is his logic? After all, he believes that

> "The democratic system of thought control is seductive and compelling. The more vigorous the debate, the better the system of propaganda is served, since the tacit unspoken assumptions are more forcefully implanted.

He also believes that in the case of Cambodia "critics of US violence" find that

> "their comment is eagerly sought out in the hope that they will deny atrocity reports, so that this denial can be featured as 'proof' that inveterate apologists for Communism will never learn. . . ."

Result: there was no genocide in Cambodia! And the earth remains flat!

NOAM CHOMSKY thinks that he should not be compared with the Nazi and Stalinist apologists. Yet he deals in the same way with Pol Pot's Kampuchea as do other cranky characters with Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia when, even now, they deny or minimise the extent of these historic cases of genocide (cf. John Bennett's letter, p. 94). I can only repeat: I find it indecent in somebody whose own people has been a target of genocide to belittle the tragedy of others who have also suffered it. . . .

During the Stalin-Hitler Pact the US Communists maintained that the refugees from Poland (then occupied by the two partners-in-crime) were not to be given credence. They also attacked the International Rescue Committee (whose chairman, Leo Cherne, is called by Chomsky a "longtime apologist for US violence and oppression") for bringing to the USA European intellectuals, refugees from Nazi-occupied and Vichy France, who were facing the danger of extermination. I wonder if Noam Chomsky is ever troubled by the thought of how unfeeling his attitude toward all these "highly unreliable" Cambodian refugees may appear to them?

HE ONCE GAVE US a short, but revealing, description of his political evolution (*New Left Review*, September–October 1969):

> "In the 'forties, when I was a teenager, I would hang around left-wing bookshops and the offices

[1] Every polemical line of his communications over more than a decade of argumentative exchanges has been published in these pages in full, without alteration: which (and he has privately conceded as much) is more than he has ever enjoyed in his own progressive-Left press.

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> of off-beat groups and periodicals, talking to people—often very perceptive and interesting people who were thinking hard about the problems of social change—and seeing what I could pick up. Then I was much interested in a Jewish organization which was opposed to the Jewish state in Palestine and worked for Arab-Jewish co-operation on a socialist basis. Out of all this, from my relatives and friends, I learned a great deal informally and acquired a certain framework within which my own way of thinking developed. . . . I withdrew during the 'fifties from political involvements, though of course I retained my intellectual interest. I signed petitions, over the Rosenberg case, for instance, and went on occasional demonstrations, but it did not amount to much. Then, in the 'sixties, I began to be more active again."

The rest, as they say, is history. "Chomsky's great intellectual prestige, deservedly obtained in the field of syntax", secured an "undeservedly respectful attention to his political writings" (*New Statesman,* 17 August 1979).

Chomsky likes to quote, as in his last book, both George Orwell and Bertrand Russell. One can imagine what the author of *Homage to Catalonia* would have thought of this particular member of another "generation of unteachables hanging around our necks like a necklace of corpses." Bertrand Russell wrote (in the preface to a book by Gustav Herling, *A World Apart,* 1951) no less relevant words about the then letter-writers who denied the existence of Stalin's forced labour camps:

> "Those who write these letters and those fellow-travellers who allow themselves to believe them share responsibility for the almost unbelievable horrors which are being inflicted upon millions of wretched men and women, slowly done to death by hard labour and starvation in the Arctic cold."

Our letter writers are still with us.

WHAT CHOMSKY CANNOT ACCEPT is that his opponents were right and he was wrong, that they perceived the nature of the beast; hence all his subsequent rationalisations. He indignantly denounced (*Political Economy,* Vol. II, p. 163) *The Wall Street Journal* which "has the gall to make the following editorial comment" (23 August 1978):

> "Now, having finished the task of destroying [the US presence in Indochina, the American liberals] are shocked and dismayed by the news of the grim and brutal world that resulted. One of the few good things to come out of this sordid end of our Indochina campaign was a period of relative silence from the people who took us through all its painful contortions. They should have had the grace to maintain their quiet at least a while longer."

Perhaps "they", but not "he." Chomsky would not withdraw—as he should have—from his "political involvements", having lost all credibility. Shouldn't his case be a warning to other progressives who try so hard not to learn from their mistakes?

Malcolm Muggeridge has often written about this problem of intellectual hygiene, and I have his permission to quote a passage from a recent personal letter to me:

> "I agree utterly with the last sentence of your 'Myths & Horrors' piece. Ever since my 1932 time in Moscow I've been pondering over the servility and credulity of Western intellectuals *vis-à-vis* the Soviet régime, constantly supposing that such an event—say, Margarete Buber-Neumann's experiences—will put paid to it all, only to find that as the Durantys and the Werths depart, the Chomskys and the Fondas come along. So, I have to conclude it's a death-wish—as my dear and now deceased colleague, Cholerton, used to put it, 'The vomit returns to the dog!' . . ."

SO IT IS THAT the radiant guru of the 1960s, Professor Noam Chomsky, is still with us; but the lustre has gone. How eloquent and refreshing he appeared to the militant students of the day, lecturing, writing, protesting, and drawing crowds everywhere! Now the spirit of '68 is gone. The sobering experiences of the 1970s revealed how blinkered he was and how threadbare his arguments were. But he is still trying to reassert his old ideological doctrines, with his usual aggressive self-righteousness, his familiar polemical tricks. It is all rather unpromising. There are few takers for old illusions. In the mournful words of Simone Signoret, "Nostalgia is no longer what it used to be. . . ."

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Literature & Criticism

An Age of Parody

Style in the Modern Arts—By MALCOLM BRADBURY

ONE OF THE HAZARDS of modern intellectual life is that one is occasionally called away from the devotions of one's study in order to attend international conferences, held in distant, sultry, foreign places where the endless sun gives one a headache, the clatter of ice in long drinks causes annoyance, and the repeated slap of the surf on the shore obtrudes into the rigours of intense debate. Despite these discomforts, I have now and then been prevailed upon to attend such occasions; and a few years ago I went to a conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, to which a group of writers and some critics from various Asian, Pacific, American and European locations came in order to talk about the state of their various literary cultures, and about the global condition of culture as such.

The topic seemed somewhat improbable; in the event, it proved extremely interesting, so interesting that a book is shortly to appear from its proceedings. To the western imagination, the meaning of the term culture in its literary sense seems reasonably clear, and its evolution coherent and comprehensible. It is an outcome of nationality and language, but it is also something larger—a cosmopolitan, Arnoldian project, concerned with the best that is known and thought in the world, which in some sense guarantees art's broad communicability and hence its universality. Art is a project of artistic professionals; and their sphere is super-national. Thus it would be hard to localise, to root in any single national tradition, the major movements that have moved through the western arts—Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Modernism. We are used to artists who, like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, travel elsewhere to forge in the smithy of their souls the uncreated conscience of their race. As George Steiner reminds us in *Extra-Territorial*, much of the best of our modern writing comes from writers "unhoused", writers like Beckett, who might be classed as Irish or as French, or Nabokov, who could be seen as Russian, German or American. And we are used, increasingly, to a literature that is therefore polysemic, polyvalent, polyglot—a literature that comes from the free movement of independent writers, a general availability of translation, and the powerful effect of writing in major world languages.

But these are not the universal conditions of writing. Writing and writers emerge variously in different cultures at different stages. For artistic perception is deeply conditioned perception: it is shaped by the prevailing orders of ideology, the assigned role of the artist, the nature of his social location, and the nature of the linguistic medium he uses.

In fact most of the world's writers do not live within our conception of literature at all—a conception shaped by a situation in which the arts are secularised and in general depoliticised, where universal literacy is assumed, publishing is independent, writing produces an income, and the avant-garde role of artists is acknowledged. But most writers write in minority languages, with little prospect of translation. They write in societies where universal literacy may be recent or not yet fully developed. They write, often, in cultures post-colonial or post-revolutionary, where the question of the definition of national culture is an urgent and often a deeply political one. They write, often, without western conceptions of individuality, or of literary commerce; and indeed they may find the spirit of western literature and western writing the sign not of high artistic development but of extreme disorientation—the sign of a tragic break between language and subject, or the evidence of the psychic disarray of liberalism.

YET THERE IS ONE SENSE—disturbing to many of the writers present—in which the diffusive power of western culture was inescapable. For what is clear is that there is a cosmopolitan cultural force that is transforming the arts of the world. It is not the potent influence of modernism or post-modernism,

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but the power of mechanical mass-culture—a culture that comes first in the form of the technology it uses, the television set, the cassette-recorder, the movie theatre, the paperback book, but which contains its own essential imagery and signal system. If culture on a world scale is pluralising and interpenetrating now, the main pressure is thus from what one critic calls "superculture",[1] which is in one sense made to be everyone's culture, and in another sense is no culture at all. The technology both contains and is a methodology—a mechanical web of virtually extra-linguistic images and motifs that identify the modern human figure, typify and structure narrative, display and disseminate styles of life. Beyond the technology is an economics and a politics. It may have proved its international force, but it is also fundamentally western, and a product of the west's pluralised and in some sense post-cultural life.

It is this culture that allures, affects and shapes existence and cultural patterns and production through much of the world, displacing much of what was there before. It speaks to a certain kind of human universality, and a certain kind of emptiness. And, for the writer in the societies that are emerging into world consciousness, it represents an uneasy pressure of cosmopolitanism. It disrupts old images of the artist and of art, and leaves them behind as elegant but fragile phenomena. But of course it is not only artists in traditional non-western cultures who feel this pressure. Any writer in the modern world is likely to feel the complex refractions surrounding him now, the pluralising images, the shattering weight of story, the seriality of production-systems which throw at us forms, assumptions, styles from many sources. There is an overwhelming multiplicity of goods, and a universalising of signs; there is also a want of significance. It is not surprising that this is increasingly manifested to us as, in art, a style, or perhaps an anti-style.

THESE THEN WERE THE SUBSTANCE of our Hawaii deliberations—which were, you might say, just another case of what was analysed, for here was a world-wide collection of writers meeting to discuss in English the problems of localism. We talked hard, as at conferences one must. But there was one afternoon when we were encouraged to pause for just a moment and engage in a brief tour of downtown Honolulu, which was reputed to be attractive. There was, indeed, beach, and surf, and sun; but the main object of our pilgrimage was to see a shopping centre, which was described to us as being the biggest in the world. And indeed no doubt it was, that week or that year; now, doubtless, there is a bigger biggest. It was a version of what you might nowadays see in many cities, in Tokyo or Manchester, Hong Kong or Dusseldorf: a conglomerate of stores with a massive capital input, laid out on many levels, covering many acres, brightened by trees, music, umbrellas, a great bazaar of carefully displayed offerings in elegant orifices which tempted entry and purchase. And here it was in Hawaii, where the cultures of east and west do indeed meet, the main utterance is *aloha!*, and American, Japanese, Chinese and Polynesian elements meet in an unstable compound. You could wander, up and down escalators, along galleries and terraces, past palm trees and tropical flowers; here was a Japanese teahouse, there an Hawaiian *mumu* shop, here a Parisian boutique, there a London pub, and round the corner the 28-plus flavours of Howard Johnson's and the steam of Colonel Sanders'. If you wanted to eat, you could eat Polynesian, Korean, American, Polish, Jewish, Japanese, Armenian, Australian, and junk.

In fact the entire shopping centre offered a fascinating commentary on our discussions. For what, of course, was being offered was not just things, but a variety of styles and identities. Each tempting orifice promised not just an encounter with a cash-register but a transforming cultural experience, an abbreviated style. You could enter this one or that and become, for as short a time as you wished, that much more French, more Greek, more Korean, more Japanese; you could take home the consequences and let them radiate through your kitchen, your living room, your bedroom. It was a bazaar of culture without consequences, or rather with only those consequences you chose to assume; and there was no identity denied to you, unless, of course, it was the confident identity you thought you had started out with. It was a playful theatre of our modern international existence, with all the pleasure of theatre, and all its anxiety, as façades crumble, experiences dissolve, and we look into the the self to find there just another actor. For we live, after all, in a time when the theatrical display of multiple styles is an essential term or condition of our modern and increasingly self-doubting existence.

Thus it is possible today to pass through an international airport, in any part of the world, and find it impossible, as we look around, to identify the nationality and source of the faces, the bodies, the clothes that pass before us. And this is not just because the same goods, the jeans, the caftans, the Adidas bags, have world-wide distribution, but because the same facial expressions, the same modes of asserting existence, style and resentment, have likewise crossed old cultural boundaries, and become an international fund of reference.

Behind this polyglot semiotics may lie a variety

[1] C. W. E. Bigsby (ed.), *Superculture: American Popular Culture and Europe* (Paul Elek, 1975).

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of different meanings, because they bear different relations to the culture they displace; if jeans in the western world are now universal and deradicalised, in Eastern Europe they still retain the weight of a political gesture. The surface of sensuous modern commercialism hides a deep and international cultural change, a turbulent global renegotiation of entitlements, a questioning and discarding of traditional modes of existence and past structures of consciousness. At the same time there is the implicit common assertion of the value of a life lived through style, a life of expectation, mobility, fluidity, modernity. And so style becomes, in our time, a means of transacting with history, engaging with cultural acceleration, consuming, spending, displaying, discovering.

INDEED STYLE HAS ITSELF, as in the Hawaiian shopping centre, become collage; and if it is true that the old conventions of identity and reality have been increasingly displaced, by the rapidity of change, the interpenetration of cultures, the acceleration of human desires and expectations, then it also seems true that what, potentially, is replacing them in the cultural melting-pot of the modern world is a kind of post-culture of instant and rapid identities, constructed out of the many available materials that our highly presentational age offers. Now we can easily, and even dangerously, sentimentalise the certitude, the solidity, the substance, the inner-directedness felt by our predecessors in the past, and overlook the degree to which a sense of identity and reality can arise from fixed and commanding orthodoxies and the claims of the authoritarian sensibility.

The politics of certitude may be a good deal more threatening than their opposite. Yet it is true that, in an era of ideological dissolution, when it grows ever harder to function in terms of fixed moral truths or a substantive version of reality, the self seems in some fashion to dissolve and resolve into new therapeutic and stylistic hungers. We learn to substitute a theatre of fictional happenings, of consciousness rather than conscience. History itself becomes a politics of performance, the dance of a protest against onerous realities which cannot, however, be final, since it measures itself against a history seen exactly as change. It is out of an endless and disconnected collage of styles that we make ourselves, offer ourselves for inspection, enact as much substance as we feel we have, reserve the right to invest differently tomorrow, transact our relationships, make our sexual alliances, our marriages and divorces, trade our bodies and our minds, seek our therapeutic authenticity.

The story of Narcissus is an old story, and the Dandy has been with us through much of history. But now the mirrors of dandyism surround us everywhere, flickering from the screens of the media, displaying the endless turmoil of discourse that surrounds us, the "great" event that seems more a filmic fiction than a fact, the empty chatter of our leaders, themselves more actors than believers. Even our own attempts at authenticity, in say, love-patter of the bedroom, seem to come from old movies and television scripts, and probably do. So sitting behind our dark sunglasses, wearing our badges saying GOD SMOKES, we inhabit a high self-consciousness, a state of knowing and anxious irony, wondering who we are today, how much we are worth, seeking to discover our "true" selves and risking a good deal to do so, while theatrically perceiving the suspect currency of all performances. No longer do we behave as if we lived in an era of reality, existed under the pressure of assigned roles or attributed functions or in predetermined and historically patterned relationships. We do not exist in the matrix of a single culture; rather we function on the edge of interaction of many cultures, in a new instant internationalism.

Karl Mannheim once remarked on modern man's dependence on a secular historicism, by which "we tell by the cosmic clock of history what the time is." And it is in the complex relation between modern historicism, style and a therapeutic model of the self that we seem to seek our continuance. Perhaps it is hence appropriate that it is in the land of late liberal ideology, where the triumph of the therapeutic seems to have run its fullest course, and where the force of multi-culture has been especially strong, that we can see the largest evidence of the sensibility I am considering—which, in a recent fascinating book, Christopher Lasch calls "the culture of narcissism."[2] Lasch's book, which has caused much controversy, is specifically a culture-reading of the United States in the 1970s, "an age of diminishing expectations", and an attack on its "decadence." Lasch calls it a study of

> a way of life that is dying—the culture of competitive individualism, which in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self.

THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM is one of the best books of culture-reading we have had out of the States for some time—a powerful evocation of what has been called the "Me Decade", the America of political withdrawal and abeyance,

[2] *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations* By CHRISTOPHER LASCH. W. W. Norton, $11.95, £6.95.

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obsessive concern with individual life-style and life-therapies, of Eric Berne's "intimacy, spontaneity and awareness", or Dr Wayne W. Dyer's "Live . . . Be you . . . Enjoy . . . Love . . ." (*Your Erroneous Zones*), of passages, life-enhancement, and the singles bar where the post-couple self presides, authentic beyond authenticity. It is also an attack on a severed world in which we see not only the poverty of prevailing social ideologies but the equivalent poverty of the narcissist's inner life, caught in the "banality of pseudo-self-awareness." Christopher Lasch sees a general failure of reality, which emerges as ideology; and he reads it not just in the triumph of the therapeutic but in the whole direction of politics and the arts.

It was, in fact, in the 1950s and early 1960s that we heard much of the movement known as the absurd, the sense of social estrangement and existential exposure in a world that could scarcely be realised as real. It was in the late 1960s that we seemed to see a revolt against this, in a rising radicalism that asserted the claims of commitment and involvement. But this itself was a radicalism informed by the politics of performance, a behavioural politics, a dance of styles. Many of its supporters became apostles of other causes once the tide of fashion and celebrity moved that way. Ideological events thus acquired the character of display, analogous to those of other forms of self-publicity; politics itself became a style, as it did in the performance-obsession of Nixon's presidency, a welter of pseudo-events and public misinformation, when statements became not true or untrue but operative or inoperative.

Lasch locates all this in the psychology of narcissism, on which he has many valuable comments, noting the narcissist's half-ironic pleasure in his own performance, his hunger for recognition and celebrity irrespective of whether or not there is a cause for it, his tendency to obliterate the identity of others in the mirrored acts of self, the tendency to consume one's own person as style. The narcissist is a kind of fiction of himself; the kind of fiction involved is reflexive or parodic. And so Lasch points us back toward literature, and appropriately offers illustrations from some of the contemporary fiction that we have come to call "post-modern", and which he reads as a cultural expression of the same tendency toward narcissism, reflecting as it does a loss of the central self, a breakdown in moral reference, and a circling uncertainty about its own substance—so Donald Barthelme's mocking self-doubt in writing:

> Another story about writing a story! Another regressus in infinitum! Who doesn't prefer art that at least overtly imitates something other than its own processes?

CERTAINLY GERALD GRAFF, in *Literature Against Itself*,[3] prefers such an art; his book is as strong an attack on the way in which the post-modernist and structuralist convention has established itself as the "radical" facet of contemporary American culture as Lasch's is on the general irrealism of the culture as a whole. In a notable essay called "The Myth of the Postmodern Breakthrough", Graff interestingly questions the now common American proposal that we have an art that passes radically beyond modernism, that this art contains new liberating energies, and that there is a positive post-humanism which constitutes what Foucault would call the new "episteme." For we now have a structuralist and a "para-critical" lore that argues the case that we live in a new era of consciousness, manifest in our literature and our arts, in which the old doctrinal illusions about the nature of reality which were expressed in literature as realism have become displaced. In the French new novel, in American post-modern writing, in the critical preoccupation with radical fictionality, art is not simply recording a situation but breaking the mould of an entire falsifying structure of discourse, challenging, in Foucault's words, the western tradition's capacity to offer its own form as the obscure content of reality, and hence creating a new order of things.

As Graff would surely admit we do have a contemporary art of vigour, interest, innovative power, widely various and plural, internationally funded. But we have also been given a supporting apocalyptics to go with it, an entire philosophy and historiography generated by critics and cultural theorists, which asserts the collapse of the realist world-view and the emergence of a new irrationalism or post-humanism. And we need, as Graff suggests, a more open view of our present cultural condition and of contemporary artistic expression.

ONE OF THE PROBLEMS of the term "post-modernism" is that it derives from a very narrow band of evidence—from the works of writers who often would not acquiesce in their identification by the term—an entire philosphy and historiography. In fact there are many post-modernisms, as there were many modernisms, and they imply many different historiographies. Our century has made many notably radical stylistic gestures, few of them, however, total, certain, or

[3] *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society*. By GERALD GRAFF. University of Chicago Press, £9.75, $16.25. Graff's book is a fascinating challenge to the arguments on behalf of cultural radicalism that have amassed in American and western thought over the 1960s and 1970s, and has special polemical value at a time when many of those arguments have been questioned by a deeply changing political world.

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definitive. André Malraux once spoke of our times as an age of the imaginary museum—an era when all the stored styles of the past and all the multiple cultural funds of the present seem to coexist together, in mechanical storage and cultural pluralism, so that all are available and none are inevitable.

The result, as A. Alvarez once said, seems not to be an era of New Style, but an era of No Style, an era in which style can transcend content but never become complete. And the French *nouvelle romancière* Nathalie Sarraute once told us that we live now in an "era of suspicion", when fictions of the real no longer satisfy, when we live in a glut of story, when authentic tropes are hard to secure. It would not be surprising if the modern writer felt he shared a situation with those who feel their search for "reality" or the "self" to be beset by knowledge of its fictionality, or its suspect theatricality, if he felt himself to be struggling with a global proliferation of images and styles with no substantive centre. This might drive him back into the ambiguous paradox of literature, which is in fact that it is simultaneously authentic, and not, both assertive and self-referential. And the outcome might then be that all literature, all art, would come to seem a form of parody.

It has been commonplace over the last two decades for writers and critics to argue that we have reached a stage of narrative exhaustion—though John Barth, who urged this argument on us in the 1960s, has since written of a contemporary literature of replenishment. Perhaps in some sense the two are indistinguishable. We are not without abundance of invention, we are rich in funds: our films, paintings, plays and novels offer us in multicultural splendour a rich bazaar of story and style. Yet they are drawn, again and again, to manifesting this in the form of incompleteness, or irony, or in a mode of withdrawn assertion. We live in the time of the mock-western, even the Japanese or Italian Western, of the anti-epic, the pastiche novel, the soap opera like *Soap* which, as Lasch says, assures "the viewer of his own sophistication by mocking the conventions of soap opera", as we live in the time of the missionary who states and mocks an opinion by wearing it across his chest, ready-made from some boutique. Pop art turns domestic objects into museum pieces, and existing museum pieces into domestic objects. Altman's films replay the old modes of the thriller, the musical, the western, to become versions of versions of versions. Paintings allude to older paintings, and then inward to the state of being but also not being themselves. Indeed, as we look around us at the arts that seem to express the stylistic condition of the times, they seem both to share and fear the suspicion that our creation itself is false, or else fiction; that the world is no more authentic or substantial than our naming of it.

PERHAPS WHAT WE LIVE IN is indeed an age of parody: an age when, as in the Hawaiian shopping centre, the feeling of substantial reality is dissipated by plurality and irony. Parody is, I take it, an ironic renegotiation of the relationship between style and substance, so that stylistic presentation passes into the foreground, and content is minimalised in the background; the result is that in some sense both become absurd. Parodic forms do indeed surround us at all levels, from the most serious texts of the times to the popular forms, playing games of nostalgia and recreation, reworking old plots of the '20s or the '50s so that we can ask at once how far away we have been and how far we have come.

One of the classic quests that we entrust to art is the quest for authenticity, but the grounds for such a style seem to have been progressively minimalised. The great modernist works are themselves works of parody: so Joyce demythicises the epic wholeness of the *Odyssey* as he tells the tale of one day in Dublin, Eliot the cultural cohesiveness of Elizabethan London as he looks over the post-war falling city. And now that we have something called "post-modernism", the parodic obsession seems to be there too, challenging the old causal plots, the old assertion of the substantiveness of the real, the old convictions about the integrality of character.

Again, there is a question of how new it all is, whether it is a periodic revisiting of an old source of art, or what the structuralists have come to call the new episteme. But perhaps the term *parody* can help us cross the uneasy bridge between the disturbance of modern culture and the direction of modern art, where the critics seem to founder so often.

PARODY HAS—as Margaret A. Rose reminds us in a sometimes ponderously repetitious but fascinating new book that addresses this question[4]—always been a presence in literature, and existed with us from classical times onward; we can hardly call it a novelty. We have had strong ages of parody in the arts before this, notably in the Renaissance and Enlightenment context of neo-classicism, when parody functioned as a principle for the innovation of new genres. Indeed, most of our great writers have been possessed of the knowledge that all literature is in some sense parody, all writing a re-writing. A literary text is an endeavour toward an authentic meaning *and* a self-generating artefact; moreover, the arts proceed historically through a process of imitation, accretion, emendation, variation. And literature is our

[4] *Parody//Meta-Fiction*. By MARGARET A. ROSE. Croom Helm, £9.95.

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name for a monument that is both solid and evanescent.

Parody, by accepting the truth of the monument, but also by probing and questioning the artifice used in its construction, both perpetuates and destroys, becomes a form of mysterious translation, often but not always in the same language as the original, which explores the mystery of institutionalisation and the paradox of the classic art-object or text. It exaggerates a process basic to literature and art, which oscillate between the extremes of mimesis and artifice, insisting on both the force and the emptiness of a prior object. Hence the critics, who have normally acted in the interests of institutionalisation, have usually distrusted the parodic, and relegated it to the literary basement, along with other low tactics like burlesque, travesty, pastiche, and satire.

But this is to underestimate its power and relevance. Most of the great writers have practised it, and it is present in many of our classic texts. Sometimes what has been parodied is an individual writer, often one monumentally in the way, or one representing a vulgar deviation. Sometimes, more encompassingly, it is a whole phase of style or an entire genre. Chaucer parodied old romances, mock-imitating, in *Canterbury Tales*, an old code to penetrate it with a new one. Like most Renaissance writers, Shakespeare parodied Plutarch. Cervantes's *Don Quixote* parodies both the old romances and the kind of reader they invite, for the Don is a reader in the text. And, by mitigating romance with realism and empiricism, but also manifesting realism as a text, Cervantes inaugurated in effect an entire new genre, which we came to see as the novel. As Michel Foucault puts it in *The Order of Things*:

> *Don Quixote* is the first modern work of literature, because in it we see the cruel reason of identities and difference making endless sport of signs and similitudes; because in it language breaks off its old kinship with things and enters into that lonely sovereignty from which it will reappear in its separated state, only as literature. . . .

The book represents the beginnings of the modern episteme in literature, though, paradoxically, it begins too that cult of realism which many critics have seen as the antithesis of such an episteme.

IN ENGLAND it was the 18th century, which believed in universals and hence in monumentalism, that produced more parody than most ages. Above all there was that Cervantic enterprise which produced in 18th-century England that genre we appropriately call "novel." It arose from a persistent parodying of neo-classical structures, as Henry Fielding makes quite clear in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, a work that begins by parodying Richardson's *Pamela*, itself a parody of high-life romances which makes its heroine a virtuous servant girl. Fielding speaks of his new form as the "comic epic poem in prose", both nodding to and dissipating Aristotelian poetics; as for his parodic occasion, it opens out the way to a comic anti-plot spreading into picaresque.

It was a mode of loose construction taken to its extremity twenty years later by Laurence Sterne, who, in *Tristram Shandy*, parodied the new form of the novel itself. Thus, if novels tend to start with the hero's birth, to proceed by cause and effect, follow chronological sequence and evolution in order to reach some point of achievement in an individual life, Sterne chose to start his not with the birth of his hero, but his conception; moreover it is a botched conception, as is that of the book itself. Everything goes wrong in it; Tristram cannot tell the story in order of logic, being tempted by chance association; he cannot keep his writing time apace of events as they happen; he cannot complete the story, which in fact stopped only with Sterne's death. As in Spain with *Don Quixote*, the novel and anti-novel in the English line thus start more or less together.

It is the totality of their parodic purpose—their role as what Margaret Rose calls "a meta-fictional mirror to fiction"—that makes these two novels seem still modern works, works so modern that they have deeply influenced many modern writers, from Joyce to Beckett to Borges, and have made them a paradigm for many formalist critics, like Shklovsky and Ortega y Gasset, as well as more recent structuralist and nominalist commentators like Foucault, Bachtin, and Wolfgang Iser. For Shklovsky *Tristram Shandy* was a clear "laying bare of the literary device", a work of defamiliarisation; and that, evidently, is one function of parody. It is these larger parodic functions, indeed, that make it necessary to regard parody not just as an incidental mode of literary creation, an available technique or a form of minor stylistic play, but as a central mechanism of creation.

In the 19th century, the parodic possibility is muted by the dominance of realism, yet parody can of course *support* realism—as it does in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, or in Henry James's *Washington Square*. Indeed it is possible to see as a generative principle in 19th-century realism the parodic relation existing between it and "higher", romantic modes, impulses and attitudes. Here the function is to *intensify* the sense of authenticity, accuracy and familiarity, to discover a new style conceived of as a fairly direct address to reality. But parody also has an antithetical impulse, to substantiate the nature of fiction as self-making, forgery or falsehood. And it is this side of parody that the 20th century seems to have released, making it an essential part of modernism.

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THE TRANSITION FROM the mode of realism to the mode of modernism has been crucial for our contemporary understanding of the meaning and weight that we attach to the parodic activity. Realism is, we might say, an investment, in some fundamental sense, in cultural substance; it believes, with whatever anguishes, that the world is out there, and that words, sentences, structures can evoke a sense of what is communally known to *be* out there and what the artist might record. If it does play with forgery and falsehood, or if its art grows, as it frequently does, intensely self-aware, then it does this in the interests of transmitting the sense of a greater truth.

In this respect it is a localised art, asserting culture's determining wholeness and energy. So when, in *Middlemarch*, Dorothea goes to Rome, she finds herself in the dangerous realm of the abstracted and amoral arts, a realm of dangerous unreality. And when Henry James came to postulate for his work a Whitmanesque cosmopolitan realism ("I aspire to write", he wrote to his brother William, "in such a way that it would be impossible to an outsider to say whether I am at a given moment an American writing about England or an Englishman writing about America. . . ."), his work loses something of its substantive realism. Indeed the late novels, particularly shaped by this cosmopolitan enterprise, are markedly de-realised; they desubstantise the substantial, force a perceptual gap between the world of culture, which becomes basically a world of harsh material goods, and the world of individual perception.

Gertrude Stein, a very understanding admirer of James, was soon after to read this epistemological and grammatical dissolution in James's late work as the beginnings of modernism. She also saw it as very American, a step beyond "English literature" into the 20th-century space-time continuum, which Americans instinctively inhabited. Yet of course modernism was in fact a very European affair—Stein came to Europe to find it—and it did indeed depend heavily on cultural pluralism. The natural location for the realist was, according to James, commenting on London, "the place in the world where there was most to observe."

The modernist's city was a different kind of location, and it dissolved into a private area known as bohemia, an international urban enclave where specialists in the arts met other specialists, style was a fundamental preoccupation, and the arts became their own country. The country was fed and supplied by the remnants of national cultures and the multivalent images of the city, so that mixtures as various as Japanese haiku, Chinese ideogram, Provençal poetry, the lessons of Freud and Bergson, Venetian economics, the speed of a car going at 30 miles an hour, the significance of quantum theory, and the implications of the cinematograph met in a volatile compound. But culture was disoriented, tradition was to be had only by great labour, fragments were of the essence, and seams of connection grew theoretical and abstract, as in "montage", "collage", "post-impressionism", "cubism." Art became conspicuous composition, and sought a new epistemology of language or form.

ONE WAY TO THIS was—as Jacob Korg argues in *Language and Modern Literature*,[5] a useful new book, which amongst other things questions some of the structuralist versions of modernism—to see man as the product of his own conceptual activities; thus cognition was to be seen, as Ernst Cassirer put it in the 1920s, not as "a mere mirror, simply reflecting images of inward or outward data", but as "the well-springs of all formation."

Similar propositions become the subject of another new book, Steven G. Kellman's *The Self-Begetting Novel*,[6] which looks at the prevalence in the modern arts of a kind of novel which is "an account, usually first-person, of the development of a character to the point where he is able to take up his pen and compose the novel we have just finished reading." Kellman is not always able to stick with his prototype, since he is generally interested in what we have come to call the "reflexive" novel, which takes more forms than this, but he is very usefully comparative, looking across the cultures. The aim of his prototypical novel—his title holds a pun—is the attempt at once to beget a self and a novel. But both self and novel tend to invoke the competition and pressure of other literary works, with a self-consciousness fitting Robert Alter's definition of the self-aware novel, which is "a consistent effort to convey to us a sense of the fictional world as an authorial construct set up against a background of literary tradition and convention."

In fact, the tendency of the self-begetting novel—as Kellman notes—is to move progressively toward parody. For the self-begetting novelist is aware of his predecessors, and the enterprise itself becomes increasingly suspect; thus, as we move from Proust and Gide to Beckett or Nabokov, we find the one true product of the self-

[5] *Language in Modern Literature: Innovation and Experiment*. By JACOB KORG. Harvester Press, £13.50. Korg's is the opening volume in the new series "Studies in Contemporary Literature and Culture", edited by Patrick Parrinder.

[6] *The Self-Begetting Novel*. By STEVEN G. KELLMAN. Macmillan, £10.00. Kellman's book discusses, among others, Proust, Sartre, Butor, Iris Murdoch, Henry Miller, and Beckett, and is particularly notable for the *comparative* attention it gives to the subject: thus the discussion of Murdoch profits very greatly from the comparison with the French tradition.

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begetting novel is the text in which it has not yet come into existence. Parody was crucial to the enterprise of modernism, and it is possible to argue that it was parody of a new kind.

OUR GREATEST WRITERS and painters—Joyce and Beckett, Picasso, Duchamp, Magritte, for example—have not only been parodists, but have inhabited some of the central parodoxes of parody. We can take them as the great modern stylists, yet find in their work the deep, dark indication that there is *no* assertable style, no ultimate authenticity that words and forms can confer in totality. We can see, in fact, parody moving toward the centre of the formal episteme.

Thus James Joyce, rewriting the *Odyssey*, set it in Dublin and wrote it in Zurich, looking from the long international perspective of expatriation at the collaged material of the naturalist world of his home city, enacting that distance as a style. The borrowed plot of the novel is of course the classic myth of homecoming, the myth of the wanderer who returns in disguise to his native shore and discovers his world in new fashion. Joyce engages the myth, but also parodies it. *Ulysses* is a narrative from many voices, inside the text and outside it, each alluding to more stories, and of course above all to the story of stories, Homer's, about the storyteller narrating his way back into his wife's bed, as in lowered circumstances Leopold Bloom does with Molly. The controlling narrator proliferates modes of telling, a multiplicity of cultural voices and registers.

The correspondences with old stories are both real and false: "not that the cases were identical or the reverse." At times the parodies mock, in traditional fashion, artistic or verbal excess; but basically (as Jacob Korg says in his book, which again sees parody as a significant mode of modernist experimentation) it functions more radically, to exhibit the articulated flexibility of language, and hence to generate a new idiom.

And this is the enterprise that spreads yet further in *Finnegans Wake*, about which Beckett said: "Here form is content, content is form.... His writing is not about something, it is something itself." The multicultural system of references, the pluralisation of registers and language systems, the project of a supra-language distinct to the given text, generates an extraordinary collaged discourse, which, as Clive Hart has said, is best read as an unbroken series of parodies. Some of these are travesties of prior tropes or modes of expression, and mockeries of specific works, including some by Joyce himself. But the self-parody works much more fundamentally, to encompass the entire text it creates. As Korg puts it, the aim is to seek out a multivalent language, so that "no meaning is ever fixed, no word ever achieves a stable form, no location is final." *Finnegans Wake* is an epic of cultural and linguistic pluralism, and this makes it a general parody, anti-imitative, standing only for itself. You might call it parody transcendent, or what Margaret Rose calls a "parody//meta-fiction."

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT that parodic activity in the 20th century has vastly increased, and has moved from being a minor to a major mode or level of style. It has equally taken central place in the contemporary criticism of fiction and literature. Some of the central theories of modern criticism arise, as has been said, from the consideration of fundamentally parodic texts—like *Don Quixote*, *Tristram Shandy* and *Finnegans Wake*—as literary paradigms, manifesting the structural complexity of literature, its modes of "defamiliarisation", of "deformation", of "intertextuality." Indeed for many critics parody has become a kind of prototype of all literature—as in the arguments of Pierre Macherey. In this respect, realism has come to seem to many eyes either an abnormal or naive phenomenon—a discursus in the history of art—or else as itself a species of parodic enterprise. Thus there can be no doubt that this intensification of the parodic, in literature and in criticism, has much to do with the qualification or collapse of the mimetic view of literature—even though parody can in fact *support* a mimetic view, as we saw in the case of 19th-century writing. Certainly parody has reinforced criticism in its own epistemology. As Margaret Rose wrily puts it, for many modern critics

> parody not only represents the rejection of an older concept of imitation, but comes to stand for a new idea of what "really happens"—for, that is, the "deformation" of reality which is necessary to its reconstruction in the literary work. It is hence also important to note that such "deforming" imitation has now also come to describe parody, and to equate it with "mimesis"!

This raises, perhaps, the crucial question in the whole debate surrounding parody in modernism and post-modernism—the question of the status of the episteme. For indeed the parody is not new, and some critics offer to make it universal. It has deep associations with moments of literary innovation and change, but ours is hardly the only time of change. Still, in a very useful chapter called "The Parodic Episteme", Margaret Rose argues that there indeed has been a change, and that historical distinctions are necessary. Thus, she says

> Parody in the work of modernists like Magritte (whose combination of images and signs can sometimes be compared with the game of "cross-reading") appears as a symptom of a new

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episteme—one in which not only the standard forms of representation and communication are questioned, but meta-criticism itself ironised.

That is, the art-work refers to others to project not only its own existence but its own fictionality, and points to the contradictions of its own status as a fiction. Not all parody is meta-fictional; but much modern parody is, and uses scepticism to generate new artistic and literary forms: self-reflection becomes a mode of freedom from the past and hence of stylistic historical action. It becomes, too, a norm of discontinuity, a means of transforming expectations and theories, or, we might say, style converted into a world-view.

YET IN ANOTHER SENSE that world-view seems not quite a view at all. For rather what surrounds us is a display of dislocated styles—or of all the styles except realism, which is present with us, but hard put to claim its luminous access to accuracy or truth. Beyond that, the voices sound in all their great variety, part of a massive enterprise in artistic activity which has much pleasure to give, but no explicit transcendental or ideological service to perform.

In Raymond Queneau's *Exercises du Style*,[7] a single incident is told in many voices, as many modes and registers as the alphabet. Books appear with their sheets loose in a box to be shuffled, like B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, or with a plurality of endings, like John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, or in the multiple registers of the new world of tape and cassette, as in John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*. We have fictions that are labyrinths or enigmas, leading us back through the circular ruins of their own forged plots. "The heroes of the book are what can loosely be called methods of composition", says Nabokov of a book by one of his own characters; the literature of these heroisms has become commonplace.

Imitation grows closer and closer to full knowledge of its own absurdity. Pastiche stories, borrowed characters, mimed styles fill today's writing—in Beckett and Borges, Calvino and Barth, Nabokov and Fowles. And parody, imitation and forgery at once, entering down deep into the textuality of the texts we read, yet also sliding along their surface, moves closer and closer to the centre.

The unhoused, refractive, polyglot nature of these writings is all too evident. Our writers have become disenchanted with the codes of fictional solemnity and the discourses of fictional expectation, and they have learned to vary all the expectations and the rules. In a world of changed

[7] *Exercises in Style*. By RAYMOND QUENEAU. Translated by BARBARA WRIGHT. John Calder, £5.95, $11.95.

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human relationships, changed epistemologies, high technology, distorted history, extravagant individual consciousness, a disoriented sense of human purpose, a welter of stylistic noise, they have become the managers of language, the masters of transaction. Yet the aim is not primarily referential; nor is it to achieve even the formally coherent sequence of many early modernist texts, which sought to bring the disordered world together in art. Their concentration is on the lexical surface of the text itself, a text dominated not by characters, symbolist perspectives, or systems of value, but by the rhythms of composition themselves. Or else the texts are game-like constructs, permuted systems, like Barth's *Chimera*, which reorders *The 1001 Nights*, the Bellerophon and Perseus myths, or Italo Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, which permutes its stories out of two Tarot packs. Intertextuality, crossed referential systems, parody are crucial: from them comes the the renewed possibility of story itself.

TO CREATE LITERATURE is to hunger for style and mannerism, to find a way to say; it is also to know style is a closure and a trap. We can recognise in the enterprise a quest for a new totality, a new language of art that will find a revealed grammar for our age; this is a prime obligation on writers. Yet we can also find secreted in the enterprise its own disquiet. Donald Barthelme's stories leave open spaces; in the spaces there is sadness. John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* doubles its own purpose, as a very 20th-century narrator who doubts realism and knows the fictionality of all narrative tells a 19th-century realistic novel about Darwinism, dark ladies and the sea of doubt, seeking to bring his characters existentially alive. In other novels—by Thomas Pynchon or Peter Handke, for example—characters lie trapped in their plots, or else—in Muriel Spark and Kurt Vonnegut—they revolt against the idea that they are someone else's fiction, fixed in another's plot or structure. But, searching for their own substantiality, they find that they are only functionaries, role-players, performance artists, parodies of selves. Meanwhile outward codes seem onerous systems rather than forms of freedom, and if outer orders are meaningless, then perhaps there is little else to do but be a parodist, or a parody.

We live in an age of what critics now call "metafiction" or "surfiction", when, says one experimental writer, Raymond Federman, the primary purpose of fiction is "to unmask its own fictionality, to expose the metaphor of its own fraudulence, and not to pretend any longer to pass for reality, for truth, or for beauty." It is this that puts parody at the centre of our fiction, that gives us a polyglot and yet cultureless fiction, a wealthy fund of story that cannot quite yield itself to become story as

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truth, yet dwells in its own anxious complexity. Parody, which knows the way literature is made, puts old plots in new settings, sees tales interpreted and reinterpreted, now in the manner of romance and now in that of realism, now in the manner of St Mark and now in the manner of Karl Marx, which sees all stories as used and reusable, enables the text to continue, wandering between the linguistic and structural codes, testing the mutability of the different rates of linguistic exchange.

It need hardly be said that there is a connection between this preoccupation and our general sense of distance from reality, our feeling of characterlessness. What, again and again, we are told is that though we cannot find the substantive centre, at least we can write. So text goes on, beyond the solid outcome of old narrative, seeking its paradoxical outcome.

"Nothing is real. All is fiction", says the central character in John Fowles's *The Enigma*; yet the sense of an enigma at the heart of story survives. We might wonder why we have an art like this, and what communal basis of parodic insight binds writer and world together now. But, though parody is an old species, it is an historical as well as a formal event. It conjoins with the fictionality we see in ourselves, as actors, provisional performers, presenters of self in everyday life; the parodic voice, knowing and uncertain, is something we readily come close to sharing.

Seeing It Crumple

Deconstructionists & Others—By LAURENCE LERNER

DECONSTRUCTION is all the rage; and for many of us, it's easier to know that we're against it than to be sure just what it is. Many attempts to tell us what it is succeed, alas, only in making us even more certain that we're against it.

Where should one start? From the horse's mouth? The principal horse is Jacques Derrida, and for those who can there is, presumably, no substitute for reading him. I am one who cannot, and to help you, dear reader, to find out if you are one who can, I will quote a sentence or two from *Writing and Difference*: [1]

> It is in no way paradoxical that the structuralist consciousness is a catastrophic consciousness, simultaneously destroyed and destructive, *destructuring*, as is all consciousness, or at least the moment of decadence, which is the period proper to all movement of consciousness. Structure is perceived through the incidence of menace, at the moment when imminent danger concentrates our vision on the keystone of an institution, the stone which encapsulates both the possibility and the fragility of its existence.

One must realise that Derrida is obsessed with the view that a work of literature—any linguistic statement, indeed—is not about the world, but derives its meaning from the act of being read by someone who knows how to perceive it as (or turn it into) a system. Then one can see that he is concerned not to allow structuralism to be used as a conservative force, submitting the individual utterance to rigid rules: hence the insistence that the moment of seeing the structure is a moment of seeing it crumple. I begin to persuade myself that one can, after all, read Derrida: so here is another sentence from the same essay:

> The universe articulates only that which is in excess of everything, the essential nothing on whose basis everything can appear and be produced within language.

NO, WE NEED HELP after all, we need to turn to the followers, or the followers of the followers. And it is no use, I am sure, going to Yale. Five Yale professors (including Derrida himself, there on a visit) have stated their critical position in *Deconstruction and Criticism*; [2] they all write in general terms, but there is a marginal concern with Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*. Harold Bloom's opaque essay seems directed at those who know his criticism already, and does not fill me with much desire to join this devoted band; but it does tell us something about what Deconstruction is. The strongest poets, in his view, "have tended to establish their mastery by the paradox of what I would call *an achieved dearth of meaning*"; to this Paul de Man adds that Deconstruction is "the systematic undoing of understanding" and announces gladly:

> The possibility now arises that the entire construction of drives, substitutions, repressions,

[1] *Writing and Difference*. By JACQUES DERRIDA. Translated with an Introduction and Additional Notes by ALAN BASS. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £12.50.

[2] *Deconstruction and Criticism*. By HAROLD BLOOM and others. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £8.95.

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> and representations is the aberrant, metaphorical correlative of the absolute randomness of language, prior to any figuration or meaning.

This is more or less the message which de Man finds in *The Triumph of Life*: for him it is a poem that tells us that "nothing . . . ever happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that precedes, follows or exists elsewhere." In a meaningless world there is nothing for a poem to be about except itself, and sure enough the "shape all light" in this poem turns out to be "the figure for the figurality of all significance." I omit Derrida's essay, which is full of verbal play and wild intelligence, but (to me) totally incomprehensible. Geoffrey Hartman writes about a rather pedestrian and moralising poem by Wordsworth, using a bit of psychoanalysis, a bit of verbal play, a great deal of bewildering jargon ("we have been concerned to reveal the structure, or phenomenology of the word-wish in the form of the fiat") but under it all one suspects there is a true feeling for Wordsworth's poetry.

And finally, Hillis Miller, who also has a true feeling for poetry (Shelley's this time), who also likes wordplay, and who relates *The Triumph of Life* to a critical argument about whether deconstructionist readings are "parasitic" upon "the obvious or univocal reading." A mildly interesting account of Shelley's use of the parasite/host metaphor failed to convince me that his poetry is much of a contribution to this debate; but once again, there were some useful clues about Deconstruction. Its aim is "to demystify the mystifications of literary and philosophical language" but it "is of the same nature as what it works against. . . . It does again as it undoes." There is also a statement about "the ultimate justification of this mode of criticism" which is, "as of any conceivable mode, that it works. It reveals hitherto unidentified meanings. . . ."

On this there are two comments to make. First, that the meaning we are proffered—"the co-presence in the parasitic structure in Shelley of idealism and scepticism"—seems familiar enough: I doubt if I've *learned* much about Shelley's poetry. And second, that to make statements like this Miller clearly has to reject the "serene linguistic nihilism" that Bloom so happily attributes to de Man: there must for him be a criterion for judging the meanings revealed and a possibility of a mode of criticism *not* working. There must be such a thing as meaning.

AVROM FLEISHMAN'S *Fiction and the Ways of Knowing*[3] is dedicated to Hillis Miller, discusses Derrida, and is clearly involved with this same critical tradition; but it quite explicitly rejects the linguistic nihilism. After pointing out that Derrida leaves the real world as fictional as the verbal one, and that for him "there is no direct contact with reality (he rejects the concept of perception)", Fleishman examines the consequences of this scepticism for literary criticism, by discussing a number of critics for whom fiction possesses none of the characters of reality.

He takes as a test case the use of proper nouns in a novel. "Oslo" in Sigrid Undset, or "Blackfriars Bridge" in *Daniel Deronda* have not the same mode of existence as the real city and the real bridge, but we none the less need to distinguish between their effect and that of a fictional name; and to notice what a rich intermediate area there is (as when the fictitious Reverend Arabin has "sat for a while at the feet of the great Newman"). This leads him to a theory of fiction as the supplement of historical and philosophical writing—"the place where concepts and facts are allowed a moment of rest and contemplation in their own right, before continuing their energetic careers." We cannot therefore glory in the uniqueness of fiction "without frequent forays into other ways of knowing and writing the world." This is a perfectly acceptable restatement of the doctrine that fiction is an impure art: the one obvious trace of structuralist theory in it is the omission of a preposition after "writing."

At this point two reactions are possible. One is impatience that it should be necessary to restate the obvious: did anyone ever doubt that Oxford Street, in a novel, has a less wholly fictional existence than Shandy Hall? But we can also say that having to restate the obvious is invaluable, and that we need a few wild critical theories so that they may compel us to find and cling to the ineluctable presence of a real world within all fictional worlds.

All Fleishman's book is based on the necessity of "forays into other ways of knowing": each of its twelve chapters, after the introduction, discusses one English novel in relation to another discipline ("an application of anthropological theory to *Northanger Abbey*", "an interrogation of the metaphysical in *To the Lighthouse*", etc.). It is a promising programme, and Fleishman is a lively critic, but I have to admit to disappointment with the results. Let us take *Northanger Abbey*: in his eagerness to show that the novel is about the socialisation of Catherine Morland, that what she learns is the use of rhetoric, and that "events, both social and psychological, hardly exist without a language to enumerate them", Fleishman treads very solemnly on the toes of Jane Austen's irony. It is true that Catherine's picture of General Tilney as a Gothic monster, straight from Mrs Edgeworth, turns out in the end, on a realistic level, to be true; but this does not make it any less silly. Gothic melodrama is *not* a "useful metaphoric construct" to shape one's

[3] *Fiction and the Ways of Knowing*, by AVROM FLEISHMAN. University of Texas Press, £10.50, $15.00.

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response to other people, it is a distortion whose relation to reality is purely accidental. There was no need to read *Udolpho* in order to discover what sort of person the General is.

A MORE ELABORATE CHAPTER discusses *Daniel Deronda* and offers a reading so eccentric as to have a certain charm. F. R. Leavis's suggestion that the work falls neatly into a good (English) and a bad (Jewish) half, and that it is tempting to extract the former and call it *Gwendolen Harleth*, is now well known. Fleishman simply reverses this, preferring the Jewish half, which he calls *Daniel Charisi*, and treating it as an attack on English Philistinism, a demonstration that the Lockean and utilitarian elements in the liberal tradition are exposed (and could be redeemed) by Israelite idealism and the higher but alienated culture represented by Zionism. No one would dream, from Fleishman's discussion, that the author of *Daniel Deronda* had edited *The Westminster Review* and was herself at the centre of the English liberal and sceptical tradition; and to see that unthinking conservative and well-bred bully Grandcourt as an "allegory of the liberal ideology" is simply absurd.

As well as a wild interpretation this chapter offers a highly unusual value-judgment; and the more I think about it, the more I realise that the two have nothing to do with each other. Even if Fleishman's interpretation was correct, that would not mean that the English half was inferior; and that part of the essay concerned with evaluation is by far the most cursory. Grandcourt is dismissed as belonging in "the contemporary mode of American romance, if not in the Gothic novel"; Gwendolen is better but marks no advance beyond Rosamund Vincy of *Middlemarch*; both are figures of the "low mimetic mode", and give us a "satiric reduction, if not a virulent distortion" of the world that Daniel rejects.

I had to rub my eyes on reading this. I would like to see the Gothic novel whose villain shows such a terrifying reality of cool contempt as Grandcourt shows to his assistant Lush ("'Just leave me alone, will you?' said Grandcourt, in his lowest audible tone") and then spends his evening among the periodicals in his drawing room "in sitting meditatively on a sofa and abstaining from literature." If that is low mimetic I could do with less of the higher, and if that is virulent distortion then the world is full of sentimentalists. As for "no advance beyond Rosamund Vincy", I suppose *Macbeth* marks "no advance" beyond *Lear*, but this does not lead us to prefer *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

There is a good deal that is illuminating in Fleishman's book but it is not nearly as interdisciplinary as it claims. The chapter I found the best—on *To the Lighthouse*—really was about a way of knowing, for by showing the connections

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of the novel with McTaggart's philosophy it both moves into a genuine philosophic inquiry and remains in touch with the central concerns of the novel. But too many of the others are straightforward literary criticism dressed up with a sprig or two of philosophy or anthropology.

DESCRIBING TO A FRIEND the experience of reading these books, I was asked if there was any I had really enjoyed reading. The nearest I could come to saying yes was to mention Leo Bersani.[4] He too is a deconstructionist of a strongly psychoanalytic bent. "The viability of the structured self", he believes, "depends on an impoverishment of desire": a view which derives from the Freud of *Civilisation and its Discontents*, but in Bersani's hands sheds the accepting pessimism of Freud. He sets out to campaign against "the sublimating processes of mental life" and in favour of "desublimated desire." Bersani explores the role of psychoanalysis in this campaign with great insight and subtlety. Although it is psychoanalysis which teaches us how great a price we pay for civilisation, and how repression can damage the psyche, it has also taught us the necessity of adjusting to the repressing mechanisms. "My fundamental objection to psychoanalytic criticism", says Bersani (and he could say the same of psychoanalytic therapy) "is that it upsets conventional psychological categories only to provide a powerful reinforcement of the cultural imperatives regarding personality from which those categories derive."

What is the role of literary form in this story? "There is I think a commitment to a *psychological* integrity or intelligibility which has been a constant in Western culture." The art of literary expression imposes on the inchoateness of desire a coherence that forms part of the process which restrains it: this is "literature's complicity with the rational articulations and structural coherence of language." The first half of Bersani's book deals with the literature of the past, and is full of insights. A very intelligent chapter on Stendhal asks whether a compromise is possible "between society and the hero, between the father and the son", but leaves me unconvinced that anything has been gained by conducting the discussion in psychoanalytic terms, instead of in the more familiar (and surely, for Stendhal, more appropriate) terminology of role-playing. The opening chapter, on Racine, makes a modest but real contribution to understanding his plays, and a very great contribution to understanding psychoanalytic criticism. It is from this chapter that the title, *A Future for Astyanax*, derives.

> *Andromaque* gives us Racine's purest image of a liberating betrayal of the past; but the play brings us only to the threshold of a new order for which no content is imagined.

Astyanax is the subject of the conflict of passions we see enacted, and his survival suggests the possibility of an emancipation from passion. But we learn nothing about him: he is "the clean blankness of being", and if we could imagine his future we might be able to imagine a "new order for desire."

AND SO TO THE SECOND HALF of the book, which looks at the harvest of Deconstruction, the possibility of a literature that will not necessarily be committed to a coherent version of the self. This immediately presents Bersani with a problem. Will such a literature be totally new, or are there precedents in the great writers of the past? He offers us three precedents, Lautréamont, Emily Brontë and Rimbaud (all of whom, it is worth mentioning, died—or stopped writing—before they were thirty).

Emily Brontë is clearly the most interesting case, since she is not a modernist. Bersani claims that *Wuthering Heights* uses its complicated network of family relationships to subvert individuality, presenting the "original" self as "the reproduced, reflected, repeated self which the real and imaginary resemblances, penetrations and fusions of family life provide", suggesting the fragility of our distinction between the human and the non-human, expressing a passion for otherness, seeing desire as vampiristic, and similar in both form and purpose to Lautréamont.

Now, to the lover of literature on whom the Deconstructionist programme is urged, nothing is more important than to know how far this is a programme of such radical newness that it subverts the very idea of literature, or how far it is an extension of forms of subversion with which literature has already made him familiar. Bersani frequently writes as if it was the first, but by admitting Emily Brontë he opens the door to the second. For if she is a deconstructionist, so are a host of others—all the romantics, and even most great writers. If it is Deconstruction to make Heathcliff " 'occur', in modified versions, elsewhere in the novel", what of the familiar theme of the double (in Hoffmann or Dickens or Dostoevsky), or the recurring "self" (in Hardy's *Well-Beloved*), or the Elizabethan subplot? If it is Deconstruction to blur the boundary between human and non-human, what of Keats' "Lamia" or the tales of werewolf or frog-princess? As for the passion for otherness, is that not the meaning of "Oh! that this too too solid flesh would melt,/ Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew"?

[4] *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*. By LEO BERSANI. Marion Boyars, £9.95.

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Deconstruction turns out to be an old friend, and we have all been like M. Jourdain, talking to it without knowing it.

I don't expect Bersani to agree with this, for he is a true radical when it comes to recent literature: he looks for the extreme of the avant-garde, and here he throws the respectable reviewer into a quandary. I have read very little of the pornographic paranoiac fiction he discusses, and seen little of the work of the Open Theatre or Artaud or Robert Wilson. And since I've now been told that Wilson's *Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* has nothing to do with Stalin, that its tableaux have no discernible relation to each other, that it lasts twelve hours, that one kept falling asleep and waking up and not noticing the difference, I shall not, even for the pleasure of understanding Bersani's position better, subject myself to it.

IT IS NOW TIME to ask the crucial question: if *that* is the consequence of Deconstruction, why, why, why? If it leads to "the pornographic tyrannies intrinsic to all desire", what is so attractive about it? If Artaud's theatrical programme is "an attack on the very bases of psychological intelligibility in our culture", wherein consist the delights of the unintelligible? If pornography is the orgy of the male imagination, if it shows woman's nature as being "to enact the desiring fantasies of men" by self-immolation, what is "beneficent" about it? The final pages of *A Future for Astyanax* urge us to "resist the appeal of that unity of personality assumed by all humanistic psychologies"—in order, it appears, to celebrate Nazism with Genet, fall asleep at interminable theatrical shows, and enact pornographic fantasies of being worshipped by the women we whip. If that's his future, it's a pity Astyanax wasn't killed.

THE APPEARANCE OF A BOOK called *Narrative and Structure*[5] by so humane and sensitive a critic as John Holloway might make one wonder if structuralism is now ubiquitous. Certainly a good deal of this book is abstract and not at all humane, and admirers of Holloway will not treasure it among his best; but he has in a sense anticipated that by subtitling it "exploratory essays." Not only is there a good deal of new-coined technical vocabulary, there is a frequent and deliberate use of mathematical models and even of diagrams. Stories from *The Decameron* are analysed in terms of narrative sets and the suppositions which they propone; the structure of *Phèdre* is based on

[5] *Narrative and Structure: Exploratory Essays*. By JOHN HOLLOWAY. Cambridge University Press, £7.95.

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arrangements of beliefs in the main characters, and of each of these there is an "effectively complete enumeration"; stories by Chekhov, Lawrence and James are shown to consist of presented items, progressive items and density items, and to "display a massive transference of formal relationships away from the progressive items and onto the density items."

All these terms are explained in the book: Holloway is at the opposite extreme from the Yale deconstructionists in that his aim is not to bemuse his reader but to be understood. Furthermore, he is a structuralist who also believes in content: he constantly returns to the reading experience to test whether his analyses are trivial or significant, and he is capable of speaking of "matters about structure which may be expressed in formalised terms *but* [my italics] which are of genuine interest from a literary standpoint." Holloway's culminating defence of structural analysis is forceful but not narrow: he concedes that it tells us nothing about the medium of the literary work (i.e. language), only about its mode (i.e. narrative), and he admits that both are important.

There are two main questions to put to a book like this, the first about its method, the second about its insights. I begin with method, since this is a highly self-conscious book, and ask whether the technical terms and the mathematical analogies are necessary. Although Holloway has a talent for propounding technical terms that are often satisfying and sometimes useful, my answer to this question is, in most cases, no. This is most strikingly so in the appendix on "poetic analysis and the idea of the transformation rule", which asks what literary criticism can learn from linguistics, and claims that instead of applying linguistic theories and techniques to literature, the critics should simply take "certain fundamental conceptions" from the other discipline and use them in his own way. The conception he uses is that of transformation, and he uses it very illuminatingly on poems by Herbert and Shakespeare; but he gives the term so wide a meaning that it is difficult to see that he has in any meaningful sense taken it from linguistics, and his best discussions follow many of the traditional procedures of literary criticism. The best of the earlier chapters seems to me that on "Effectively Complete Enumeration in *Phèdre*", and I could easily undertake to rewrite it without its elaborate tables of Zeros and Ones while retaining all its central points. Should one say this with disappointment or with relief?

For those diehards who are more interested in literature than in criticism, any critical book is likely to be judged on what it tells us about actual works; and if we ask what *Narrative and Structure* has to offer in the way of insights on the *Decameron*, *Phèdre* or *Middlemarch*, I have to say that Holloway mostly tells us things we know already; but that in his hands this becomes less a weakness than a strength. We have, after all, no shortage (from Yale and elsewhere) of I'll-bet-you'd-never-have-thought-of-*that* criticism, and it is refreshing to read Holloway and be told, Did you realise what was necessary to make the work into this, as he reveals some structural principles that are the necessary basis for effects we have already received (though perhaps not noticed). His "exploratory essays" explore not so much new meanings for the work as new ways of understanding how the meaning is constituted.

TO TURN FROM DECONSTRUCTION (it seems time to drop the capital) it was one kind of relief to turn to Holloway's humane structuralism; it is another kind to turn to feminism. Not that feminism nowadays is simple, or comfortable, or untouched by the deconstructionists. The essays in *Women Writing and Writing about Women* are so varied that no unifying position or even vocabulary is perceptible.[6] If anything holds them together it is a question: Is our very language so impregnated with patriarchy that it cannot be used to express a feminist view? The most humane and illuminating answer comes from Inga-Stina Ewbank, who writes on Ibsen and the Language of Women with the two enormous advantages of a sensitively discriminating intelligence and a knowledge of Norwegian. Two of the essays are highly direct and personal: Elaine Feinstein on Russian women poets of the 20th century, most of whom she has translated, and Anne Stevenson on her own career as a poet. Both have an immediacy that hits one with a kind of relief.

Cora Kaplan in "The Indefinite Disclosed" discusses the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti in an essay that I have to regard as typical of much ideologically committed criticism. It starts by asserting that the attempt of these poets, in their lyric poetry, "to escape immediate or specific social determination" is "a project that cannot finally be realised, since all representation as such must exist within a cultural discourse"; and it concludes by reasserting that the poems "cannot transcend the ideological orientation of their authors", and then insisting that criticism is, like poetry, political: "the writing of Marxist-feminist literary criticism is not a neutral activity, but speaks from within a specifically defined political dialectic."

Now here are two positions that I for one cannot accept. Lyric poetry is not tied to specific social determination in the way many other forms of writing are, and though one can sometimes find traces

[6] *Women Writing and Writing about Women*. Edited by MARY JACOBUS. Croom Helm, £9.50.

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of such determination in the lyric, they are in my view usually much less important than its endeavour to express more universal emotion. In between these general assertions comes the essay, which is excellent; which illuminates Christina Rossetti's poems in a way that this liberal-feminist reader found very helpful, and which shows them to be very much concerned with emotions that are *not* tied to immediate and specific social determination.

I WILL CONCLUDE with the splendid and sparkling opening essay by Elaine Showalter (better to my mind than her sometimes disappointing book *A Literature of Their Own*), written with wit and passion, which divides feminist criticism into the feminist critique (how women read male-produced literature) and gynocritics (the study of writing by women), and offers us examples of each. It concludes with a statement of some of the dilemmas of the feminist critic:

> We are both the daughters of the male tradition, of our teachers, our professors, our dissertation advisers and our publishers—a tradition which asks us to be rational, marginal and grateful; and sisters in a new women's movement which engenders another kind of awareness and commitment, which demands that we renounce the pseudo-success of token womanhood, and the ironic masks of academic debate.

There is only one word in this eloquent statement to protest about, but it is a protest I must make: the word is "rational." There are elements in our male-dominated academic culture that the feminist will want to throw off, and of course these include, nowadays, the assumption that women will be marginal in professional life and should be grateful for what they've got. But (and I realise no deconstructionist could say this) there will be elements that are equally necessary to an alternative culture. The feminists after all are not the only ones challenging our tradition: we have the claims that our education teaches "bourgeois mathematics" or "white man's history."

No society will be properly perceived if it is seen simply as oppressive, and the main task of the radical is to sort out, in our language, our social institutions and our habits of thought, the oppressive, the neutral, and the subversive. And I am absolutely sure that rationality is not oppressive, and that incoherence never made anyone a better radical. I think Elaine Showalter is here using "rational" as an ironic mimesis of the male professor's condescension, for she writes with

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much true rationality; but the joke is a dangerous one. It opens the way to too much. The life of reason and the institutions of civilisation (and here I part company utterly and irrevocably from Derrida and Bersani) enrich more than they oppress, and man as a social being is in a better state than Astyanax indulging in primitive and unchecked self-gratification.

Now Read On

Medieval Literature—By JILL MANN

C. S. LEWIS PLAYED a major part in creating and establishing in English universities the concept of medieval and Renaissance literature as a coherent whole. He also had a way of writing about it that was instantly comprehensible, exciting and humane; it would be interesting to know how many present-day medievalists had their interests formed under the spell of *The Allegory of Love*. The re-issue of his *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* [1] in paperback prompts the question of how much medieval studies have followed or diverged from the guide-lines laid down by his work.

In the first place, the focus of interest is now rather different from his; the bulk of this collection is formed by his essays on Dante, Malory, Tasso and Spenser, whereas modern critics tend to focus squarely on 14th-century England and the Holy Trinity of Chaucer, Langland and the *Gawain*-poet. Lewis was, of course, part of, and partly responsible for, the great wave of interest in *Troilus and Criseyde*, but it is odd to reflect that this great medievalist wrote little on the *Canterbury Tales* or *Piers Plowman*, and almost nothing on *Gawain*. The last omission is perhaps the oddest, because Lewis's habitual bias was towards romance, as he himself was aware. He also felt that this bias represented a selective, even a distorting, attitude to medieval literature.

> . . . it was the Ballad and the Romance which first excited modern interest in the Middle Ages; Medieval studies began there. The reason is simple. These forms appealed to the Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even now many of us were first lured to Medieval studies by this romantic attraction . . . . [But] that boundlessness, indefiniteness, suggestiveness are not the common or characteristic medieval mood. The real temper of those ages was not romantic. . . . Characteristically, medieval man was not a dreamer nor a spiritual adventurer; he was an organizer, a codifier, a man of system.

THE INTEREST in medieval romance continues to flourish. The London Medieval and Renaissance series has just brought out two volumes of medieval romances (edited by A. V. C. Schmidt and Nicolas Jacobs) [2] and Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* (edited by Gerald Morgan).[3] But other recent publications suggest less contentment with Lewis's view of the characteristic orthodoxy of "medieval man." Medieval writers compel attention and respect in so far as they are *un*orthodox. Terry Jones gives us a Chaucer who criticises the chivalric enterprises of his day as mere butchery, motivated by greed, and who chooses for his own tale "a pacifist tract." [4] David Aers [5] gives us a Chaucer who reveals the emotional stultifications resulting from the traditional tyranny of men over women; and a Langland whose intellectual honesty drives him to recognise the split between "a cherished frame of ideas received from the past" and "an imaginatively grasped historical present" for which such a frame of ideas was inadequate.

The approaches of these last two books are very different. The first relies on a rather old-fashioned, but still potentially valuable, assumption that a literary text can be simply compared with, and explained by, historical actuality; the latter sees the literary text as re-creating and revealing in its own tensions and contradictions the tensions and contradictions of individual and social reality. Yet behind these different approaches it is perhaps possible to discern a desire to moralise medieval literature, which unites them not only with each

[1] *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. By C. S. LEWIS. Collected by WALTER HOOPER. Cambridge University Press, £4.50.

[2] *Medieval English Romances*. Edited by A. V. C. SCHMIDT and NICOLAS JACOBS. Hodder and Stoughton, £5.95 (Part One) and £7.45 (Part Two).

[3] *Geoffrey Chaucer: The Franklin's Tale from the Canterbury Tales*. Edited by GERALD MORGAN. Hodder and Stoughton, £3.15.

[4] *Chaucer's Knight: The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary*. By TERRY JONES. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £8.95.

[5] *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination*. By DAVID AERS. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £9.75.

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other but also with those who take a more conventional view of Chaucer and Langland. A recent collection of *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde*[6] shows something of a backlash against "the complex qualification of the moral" which Talbot Donaldson took to be "the meaning of the poem", in favour of an unqualified didacticism. Alan Gaylord identifies "the motto of the modern critic"—"*only complexly qualify*"—in order to reject it, and to assure us firmly that there is no reason why "Troilus and Criseyde could not have loved reasonably." And in the same volume, John Frankis argues that the poem's moral is directed against paganism, which "cannot sanctify and perpetuate human love because it lacks the sacrament of Holy Matrimony."

This kind of moralising virtually announces its own limitations—does Frankis *really* believe that the sacrament of Holy Matrimony has the power to perpetuate human love? But more subtle kinds of moralising are harder to find fault with while still avoiding the trap of "complexly qualifying" the meaning of medieval poems out of existence. The question at issue is not whether Chaucer's poetry has moral implications—it goes almost without saying that it has; the question is how the moralising is to be done. I think my own resistance to certain kinds of moralising is awakened at the point when the sense of a narrative *as story* is lost. By that I mean the sense of the narrative as a sequence of events that unfolds in time, and whose conclusion is hidden from the reader as well as from its actors, as something that has movement, that can create suspense and surprise. From this point of view, the story is not a mere piece of machinery which provides examples of actions suitable for moral judgment; its procedures and features are a subject of interest in their own right. Contemporary criticism, in contrast, often shows a tendency to resolve the story into a series of tableaux which are made into a subject for moral reflection.

TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, David Aers's discussion of the *Franklin's Tale*. Since he is interested in Chaucer's sceptical exploration of conventional, male-dominated marital relationships, he focuses first on the account of the marriage between Arveragus and Dorigen, which represents an attempt at a "utopian transcendence" of convention. Arveragus spontaneously yields the "maistrie"

[6] *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde*. Edited by MARY SALU. Chaucer Studies III. D. S. Brewer and Rowman & Littlefield, £10.00.

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that is conventionally his right, and is rewarded by Dorigen's promise to be his "humble trewe wyf." The narrator launches into a eulogy of this "humble, wys accord", but, according to Aers, the language of his praise already reveals the frustration of utopian aspirations; since society has provided no *language* for "reciprocal and free relations", the narrator is forced to reintroduce the ideas of "lordshipe" and "servage" which have apparently just been superseded.

> *Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord,—*
> *Servant in love, and lord in mariage.*
> *Thanne was he bothe in lordshipe and servage.*
> *Servage? nay, but in lordshipe above,*
> *Sith he hath both his lady and his love.*

"The narrator then moves into his story . . . "—but Aers does not move with him. Instead, he goes straight to its crisis, to focus on the husband's "response when his weeping wife tells him her tale"—that she is bound by a promise she did not mean to give herself to another man. "The husband who has attempted to initiate mutual and non-coercive love, orders his obedient but unwilling wife to subject herself to another male while he himself displays the unreflexive masculine egotism habitual in the traditional culture." The narrative is frozen into two contrasting tableaux with a moral significance. (It does not affect the point that the moralisation is rather more subtle than usual or that it is directed at "traditional assumptions" rather than "the individual's errors.")

The most obvious way in which this procedure does violence to the story is the way it bereaves it of its conclusion—in defiance of Chaucer's injunction to wait for that conclusion before bringing moral judgment into play. "Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crie . . . . And *whan that ye han herd the tale*, demeth", says Chaucer, harnessing our natural curiosity as to how the tale will end to a sense that the consequences of actions must inevitably play some part in our assessment of them. The tale's happy resolution has to be shuffled off by Aers as a "comforting ending" implausibly imposed on the tale by the Franklin.

But the story qualities of the tale's beginning invite attention as much as its ending. What is odd about the beginning of the tale, from this point of view, is how much like an ending it sounds. After long courtship and "many a labour, many a greet emprise" undertaken for his lady, a knight eventually persuades her to be his wife. The narrator, so far from showing any signs of initiating the account of an action, emphasises the sense that some kind of stability has been reached by his lengthy praise of the "humble, wys accord" between husband and wife, and ends with a reference to Arveragus' living "in blisse and in solas"—"happy ever after" begins to seem the appropriate phrase. The story seems to have reached a full stop before it has even begun. What prevents a sense of total stagnation is that the unusualness of the situation—of the husband's surrender of control—creates a powerful expectation that *something is going to happen.* The reader's reaction to the unusual marriage relationship is not just "this is good", but "how will this turn out?"

THIS SIMPLE NARRATIVE creation of expectation is not just a stratagem for holding interest. It is a way of creating a kind of truth to experience which narrative might seem to obscure. Of course experience contains "happy endings", but of course there is no such thing as an ending. Just as within the narrative assurance of the close of a chapter or an episode there is also contained the expectation that the story will move on, so the seeds of change are contained within stasis. Chaucer uses narrative expectation as a way of indicating the persistence of change even when events have apparently reached a standstill. The alternating terms "lordshipe" and "servage" within the description of an apparently static relationship are not signs of "confusion"; they are the indicators of change within stasis. In fact, the stability of the marriage is created by change, by the shifts and adaptations made by both partners. The strength of the marriage is that, being built on change, it preserves the ability to move forward with the story.

It is not just at the beginning of the tale that the story seems to have reached a halting-point; it has to force its way onward through a whole series of blockages. The long soliloquy in which Dorigen contemplates suicide is a case in point. Gerald Morgan devotes to it a considerable part of his Introduction, seeing it as the rhetorical marker of an insoluble moral dilemma. But it also marks a possible "dead end" in the narrative; were Dorigen to commit suicide, not just her life but also the story would come to an end (and it would be a different kind of story, too). From the end of the story, the reader can look back at this possible resolution and see the way in which it would have closed off its actual resolution. But at the point of the soliloquy, the narrative halts for the reader to contemplate two possible, and equally gloomy, endings—Dorigen's suicide or her fulfilment of what she has promised to Aurelius. The *actual* ending of the story is not envisaged by Dorigen or by the reader. The surprise of this actual ending—Aurelius's change of heart—instructs us in the freedom of events to develop in ways other than we imagine; human beings are as powerless to forecast their development as they are to control it. A commitment to the "open-endedness" of the story becomes a commitment to the open-endedness of life.

The open-endedness is real, not merely apparent; it is not *necessary* that Aurelius should take pity on

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Dorigen (Ian Robinson has even written a version of the conclusion in which he does not). A glance across at *Troilus and Criseyde* shows the same ideal of patience which is the foundation of Arveragus' and Dorigen's successful marriage being appealed to by Criseyde in support of her disastrous departure to the Greek camp. (The proverb she quotes—"the suffrant overcomith"—is a variant of the *Franklin's Tale's* "pacience venquysseth.") As David Benson says, "There really is nothing unreasonable about the plans Criseyde makes to return to Troy after the exchange of Antenor . . . except that they are made in ignorance. In another time or place one of her schemes might easily have worked, or a final peace might really have been just around the corner as she claims to have heard." [7]

Benson correctly emphasises human ignorance, rather than immorality or folly, as the condition of tragedy in *Troilus*. "If the reader feels superior to Criseyde's folly, and many recent critics seem to, it is only because for us . . . the Trojan future is already past." Wisdom is attainable only with the end of the story, but the end of the story is the end of possible action. It may seem that the case of *Troilus* is different because we know the end of the story from its beginning. But the triumph of Chaucer's narrative here is the way he makes us forget the end through our immersion in the minutiae of the story and our sense of its free development from moment to moment. In the immediacy of our sympathy for Criseyde's anguished cry "Horaste! allas, and falsen Troilus?", it is only slowly and laboriously that we relate it to the end of the story and perceive its irony.

THE POINT is simply that narrative procedure carries its own meaning. A description of romance such as that of Schmidt and Jacobs—"a medieval romance consisted of a basic plot generally amplified by episodic extension"—thus bears a great deal of further investigation. "Plot" suggests a connectedness in events, a sequence of cause and effect, which romance writers often seem to have been at pains to avoid. How many "episodic extensions" can be added before a plot ceases to be a plot? Was it conceived as a plot in the first place? What is the significance of an author's choices about the degree of connectedness in his narrative?

Both Terry Jones and David Aers compare Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* with the *Teseida* of Boccaccio, which is its source, but neither com-

[7] *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature.* By C. DAVID BENSON. D. S. Brewer and Rowman & Littlefield, £12.50.

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ments on the surprising substitution of episode for plot in Chaucer's version. The account of Palamon's escape from prison and meeting with Arcite, for example, is transformed from a comprehensible sequence of causes and effects into a conglomeration of separate coincidences. The narrative of the *Knight's Tale*, like that of the *Franklin's Tale*, is always "stopping and starting", and there seems to be nothing inevitable about its starting again once stopped, or moving in one direction rather than another once started. The motor that drives its fitful movement is simply chance—the succession of accidents that includes Perotheus's visit to Theseus, Palamon's escape from prison, and Arcite's fall from his horse. Chance is also continually threatening to send the story down other paths; Arcite might raise an army and vanquish Theseus, Palamon might win Emily's favour even though a prisoner, Emily might refuse both of them. The narrative procedure of the tale is an acknowledgement of the arbitrariness of the development of events: it is not *necessary* that, in the end, Arcite should be dead and Palamon married to Emily.

If it is chance that determines the development of events, they cannot be interpreted as deriving from the moral shortcomings of the characters. Both Aers and Jones locate the most important moral shortcomings in the figure of Theseus, aligning themselves with R. Neuse's view of Theseus as a tyrant who attempts to adduce the arbitrary sway of the gods as a justification for the dominance of his own will. Yet Theseus's actions throughout the tale do not reveal a series of attempts to subordinate the development of events to his own will; on the contrary, they constitute a series of adaptive responses to the unexpected situations with which he is confronted—the line of weeping widows, his two enemies fighting in the grove, Arcite's accidental death. To translate this observation into narrative terms, we might say that he is always having to abandon the story-line he had envisaged, and begin to write another one. The "happy ending" of his own wedding is merely the beginning of the story of Palamon and Arcite—and no doubt the ending of that story is the beginning of some other.

THE CLUE to a true reading of the *Knight's Tale*, as J. D. Burnley shows in a fine study of Chaucer's vocabulary,[8] is its language. So far from conceiving Theseus as a tyrant, Chaucer consistently associates him with the quality that traditionally marked the antitype of the tyrant, *pitee*. Burnley brings out well the moral dimensions of *pitee* in medieval thought, and its close links with *pacience* and *suffrance*, the qualities praised in the *Franklin's Tale*. What can be added to Burnley's analysis is that Chaucer's conception of *pitee* includes the ability to *respond* to events, and thus to embrace their freedom and open-endedness; it can thus move with the story rather than engaging in the futile attempt to discover a set of moral values which will control or resist its development and render it immune to chance, change and death.

In appealing to Emily's "wommanly pitee" to move her to final acceptance of Palamon, Theseus is not, as David Aers thinks, succumbing to the male chauvinist view that women are pawns to be used in the accomplishment of male desires; he is acknowledging that his own best qualities—adaptability, flexibility, responsiveness of mind and emotion—are ones that are best demonstrated by the best of women. Interestingly, Mark Lambert's "Criseydan Reading" of the *Troilus* (in Mary Salu's collection) draws attention to the intriguing similarities between Emily, Criseyde and Theseus, all of whom share in some sense "an acceptance of things as they are." It is the "Theseus sort of character" with which, Lambert suggests, Chaucer feels himself to have "the greatest affinity." Criseyde gives us an image of human changeability leading to disaster, to entrapment within the fixed confines of a moralising end to her story ("O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!"). Theseus, in contrast, gives us an image of the creative power of change, realised in his ability to move the story on (by changing his mind, changing his plan), when it has reached a point of blockage.

It is by wanting the story to go on, and wanting it to reach an ending, even though we know that all endings are only beginnings of new stories, that we can come to understand that the potentiality for living movement is contained in even the most apparently static situation, and must form part of our moral thinking about people and events. For C. S. Lewis, the ideal way to encounter Spenser was "in a very large—and, preferably, illustrated—edition of *The Faerie Queene*, on a wet day, between the ages of twelve and sixteen." The picture may well raise a smile and the reflection that just as Lewis held the mythic approach to literature in suspicion because it had in itself a mythic appeal, so his recommended approach to romance is itself a romantic notion. But the basic reactions and interests of story-reading—"what will happen next?" "how will this turn out?"—must nevertheless remain part of our primary response to medieval romance. Criseyde is about to go to the Greeks. A husband has told his wife to give herself to another man. Two friends have fallen in love with the same woman. Now read on.

[8] *Chaucer's Language and the Philosophers' Tradition*. By J. D. BURNLEY. Chaucer Studies II. D. S. Brewer and Rowman & Littlefield, £12.50.

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Ways of Isolation

Poetry Criticism—By ANDREW MOTION

READING LITERARY CRITICISM can be so lonely. As favourite authors are abused, and admired texts mangled, the effect is to produce a sense of embattled exclusion. The same is true of literary theory. Everyone—whether they write or not—has had the experience of seeing their own views about the creation and purpose of literature held up for ridicule or ignored. Only rarely, however, does this lead to changes of mind. More often, it induces a hardening of hearts. Reading is, after all, a private activity. And so in a way is writing—not simply because it is usually performed in solitude, and not always because authors have chosen their isolation. Increasingly, it is thrust upon them—as poets have been and are especially well aware. But while their public has steadily shrunk in recent decades, and the language in which to address it has been compromised, they have been spurred to justify their continuing value. But the manifestos and so on which appear at regular intervals are more than just last-ditch stands. They are the latterday illustration of an instinct nurtured by the Romantics. When Wordsworth wrote in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* that poets are people "endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness", and insisted that they have "a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind", he set them apart and on a course which led to the confessionalism of recent years.

Isolation is the cause or theme or effect of these five books. In A. D. Hope's[1] it is the cause as well as the theme. Ostensibly, his purpose is to "explore the *material* of poetry, language", and to "describe the way poems seem to come into being and consider how this may affect our ways of talking about them." In practice, his main interest lies in apportioning blame for the gradual reduction of poetry to "a private and even a secretive affair", and in establishing the Romantics' original guilt. By looking on their environment less as an end in itself than as a means of generating personal feeling, they encouraged a belief that it is the main business of literature to permit self-expression. This shift of emphasis has, arguably, had certain unfortunate consequences, but Hope weakens his case by disparaging the Romantics themselves when he could more profitably have given his attention to some of their less competent heirs. He chooses not to emphasise, for instance, that although Wordsworth, Coleridge, et al. certainly did assert the primacy of feeling, the methods they used to realise it involved them in looking at the world around them with marvellous clarity. A similar kind of intemperance shows in Hope's judgment of modernism. Pound and Eliot are said to enjoy "a modish but essentially trivial fame", free verse is a "tedious shuffle", and surrealism licences "the incoherent vomit of [the] uncontrolled subconscious." The moving spirit behind such outbursts is often sympathetic—anger at fashionable Cults of Personality or mistaken searches for a Pure Poetry removed from familiar life—but its expression risks appearing disagreeably crusty.

This aspect of *The New Cratylus* could be played down—or regarded as engagingly prejudiced—if it did not run counter to the book's underlying interest in moderation and balance. When Hope stops bashing the State of Poetry and confines himself to investigating the Craft of Poetry instead, he is always concerned to reconcile extreme attitudes, rather than adopt them. His discussion of inspiration is typical. On one hand he gives credence to the belief that someone composing a poem "plays a comparatively minor part" in its production. That is to say, the author is not a conscious manipulator of the medium, but a prey to various subliminal forces that Hope ineptly calls the "Dream-Team." (A representative example is Goethe scribbling "*Uber allen gipfeln*" on the wall of a mountain hut.) On the other hand, he is at pains to make his own experience of writing seem invariably humdrum. For his immediate purpose this is just as well, since his most illuminating and sensible remarks are nearly always produced by a memory of having worked slowly and with great difficulty. His chapters on form, language and

[1] *The New Cratylus*. By A. D. HOPE. Oxford University Press, £12.75.

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cadence are all good—particularly the last. Whereas most people—even Robert Frost, who wrote excellently about the act of writing—tend to talk about the sound *of* sense, Hope simply refers to sound *and* sense:

> I used to try to illustrate this to my students by taking Tennyson's lines:
>
> *The moan of doves in immemorial elms*
> *And murmuring of innumerable bees*
>
> which, with its setting of a drowsy summer afternoon, has been rightly praised as an example of verbal music and metrical felicity. But if you change three sounds in the second line,
>
> *And murdering of innumerable fleas*
>
> all the delicious effect of sound echoing sense seems to vanish. It is the sense that lends the sound most of its effect.

EVEN AT ITS MOST reasonable, *The New Cratylus* teeters on the verge of stating the obvious. But compared to *Enemies of Poetry*[2] its perilous position looks stable. This is not to imply that W. B. Stanford's theme is less serious than Hope's—rather that his exposition of it is largely self-defeating. He has written the book with such furious single-mindedness that complexities go by the board. What torments him is the belief that literature—particularly Classical literature—has got into the hands of critics who use it "as material for history or archaeology or psychology", instead of appreciating it on its own autonomous terms. Armed with axioms which derive from Aristotle's *Poetics*, he fights vigorously in its defence, seeking to protect the imagination from being undervalued, and "to identify and if possible to refute the main reasons why non-literary scholars and critics have so often misunderstood and misrepresented fictional writing."

In principle, these are entirely praiseworthy ambitions. But as Stanford attacks the "enemies of poetry" he seldom makes their threats seem freshly made. Walter Leaf, for example, is chastised for ignoring Homer's "psychological and ethical theme" in an edition published in 1896, and Gilbert Murray is ticked off for committing similar crimes in *Rise of the Greek Epic* (1907). When Stanford's lash falls, what it strikes sounds suspiciously like a dead horse. Or rather, a whole string of dead horses. Having set out the terms of his argument, he begins reprimanding historicists like Schliemann for viewing literature primarily as a reservoir for facts and archaeological data, then moves on to Scientists, Psychologists, Mathematicians, Philosophers, Politicians and Moralists in quick succession. In every category, ancient and modern reductive readings are recorded, before judgment is made by reference to the Aristotelian ideal. As sentences are passed, Stanford reiterates his belief that what counts is "verisimility rather than verity, persuasiveness rather than accuracy, pleasure rather than instruction, and that statements in poetry that are contrary to scientific fact, whether through choice or ignorance, are reprehensible only when they harm the effect of the poem."

Once these varieties of wrong-headed critic have been dismissed, Stanford defines "Twenty-six Fallacies of Classical Criticism" used to achieve their corrupt ends. These range from "The Fallacy of False Inference" via "The Character-as-author Fallacy" to "The Fallacy of Silent Reading"—but it does not take long to realise that their interest (for Stanford as well as his readers) lies less in exposing recurrent errors than in providing the framework for a lifetime's collection of literary tit-bits. Each fallacy is illustrated with such generous displays of learning and reference that the original reason for introducing it is swamped. Four and a half pages, for instance, are given to "The Fallacy of Impropriety"—editorial prudery, in other words—citing examples which include Chapman, Pope, Leaf and Gladstone. Occasionally there are signs that, had the material been given a different emphasis, it could have been well used to reveal changing attitudes to fact and fiction. But this possibility is persistently set aside, in favour of such things as reproving Ptolemy II for objecting to Homer's mention of violets and wild celery growing together. The latter was much more likely to have been marshwort.

CHARLES MOLESWORTH'S STUDY of contemporary American poetry seems a world away.[3] In one respect, however, his book has a similar motivation. Like Stanford, he is concerned with the causes and effects of exclusion—but instead of condemning attempts to deny the imaginative element in literature, he investigates the isolation of poets from society at large. And in spite of having chosen a horribly pretentious title, he does so simply and revealingly. "I think, I hope", he says, "it is possible to use the insights of people with largely or exclusively formalist preoccupations to illuminate areas of thought, expression and action that are concerned not only with form. I also think purely formalist concerns are only part of the aesthetic experience."

---

[2] *Enemies of Poetry*. By W. B. STANFORD. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £8.95.

[3] *The Fierce Embrace*. By CHARLES MOLESWORTH. University of Missouri Press, $19.50, £11.70; paper $5.95, £2.95.

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Investigating what Molesworth calls "immersive" poetry has become a popular pastime for academics in recent years. And as a few of them are beginning to realise, they played an important part in its emergence, as well as giving it the seal of critical approval. To risk speaking simplistically: since the Second World War, American poets have tended to eschew the defensive ironies associated with their modernist ancestors, smash any well-wrought urns they could get their hands on, and reassert the value of unashamedly personal utterance. They have rebelled, in other words, against what has come to be called "academicism." Yet at the same time, many of them have worked as poets in residence, been pampered by universities, and developed an awareness that their audience beyond the campus was strictly limited. (According to Molesworth, any first book by an American poet is likely to sell less than seven hundred copies.) The effect has been to produce a context for literature in which personalities count for more than poems, interviews threaten to overshadow creative work, and writers are driven in on themselves to speak "not as in the heroic self-mythologising of Yeats, but as in the quotidian tones of people talking shop."

One of the most successful early revolts against orthodoxy was led by Charles Olson. But once his campaign for "Projective Verse" had caught public attention, there followed a poetic free-for-all which has shown little sign of subsiding. In spite of their seemingly diverse aims, writers such as Theodore Roethke, John Berryman, Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath—or distinct conglomerations like the Beat Group or the New York School—have at least two things in common. Their careers are a search for "individuation", and their ambitions are all circumscribed by the "lack of a sustaining audience." Allen Ginsberg provides an interesting example. Like so many of his contemporaries, he has found that attempts to increase the size of his public have exposed the lack of an adequate language in which to address them. And the effect of his predicament has been to turn his searches for self into mere self-seeking:

I'm an old man now, and a lonesome man in
Kansas
but not afraid
to speak my loneliness in a car,
because not only my lonesomeness
it's Ours, all over America,
O tender fellows—
& spoken lonesomeness is Prophesy.

John Ashbery has tackled the same problem from a different and slowly changing angle. Initially, in fact, "tackled" is hardly what he did at all—his earliest collections registered a sense of exile from social reality by refusing to advance any rational sequence, argument or narrative. It was a

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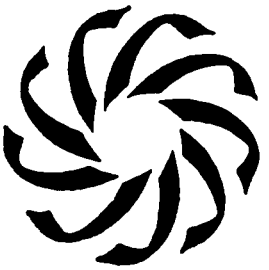

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method unlikely to win him much popularity with the world at large. But over the years, and particularly in his most recent collections, *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* and *Houseboat Days*, obscurity has given way to a more lucid discussion of feeling and "the nonappearance of feeling", expression and the difficulties of expression:

> *And just as there are no words for the surface, that is,*
> *No words to say what it really is, that it is not*
> *Superficial but a visible core, then there is*
> *No way out of the problem of pathos vs. experience.*
> *You will stay on, restive, serene in*
> *Your gesture which is neither embrace nor warning*
> *But which holds something of both in pure*
> *Affirmation that doesn't affirm anything.*

LOUIS SIMPSON SHARES—in broad outline—many of Molesworth's views about post-modernist poetry, and shows almost none of his expertise in discussing them.[4] This is not due to lack of interest or concern—rather the reverse. He has a wealth of admiration for his subject, but unfortunately it produces little more than factual accuracy. Literary judgment is another matter—as his mention of 1948 as the crucial date in recent American poetry illustrates. "In that year", he says, Ginsberg "had his 'Blake epiphany experiences', Charles Olson had published *Call Me Ishmael*, and Gary Snyder, having finished his thesis, sat by the Willamette River at dawn and saw a thousand birds fly out of the trees. Everything, he realised, was alive, the entire universe was alive." A little of this sort of thing is too much, although it is in a sense sympathetic to Simpson's intentions, which are to "convey a feeling" about writers who make much of their capacity to convey feelings. Auden is repeatedly spurned for having exerted a constrainingly rational influence on American poetry, and Dylan Thomas, Ginsberg, Plath and Lowell are praised for having reinstated passion and vitalism.

They are praised but not—*pace* the title—studied. Simpson explains that his method, like his subject, is "somewhat personal", and in practice this means rehashing biographical material published elsewhere, before making a few remarks about his chosen writers' aims and strategies. His section on Thomas, for example, begins by conflating Paul Ferris's excellent biography and Daniel Jones's reminiscences, blurring the image they worked hard to clarify. Out goes analysis of the poems, and in comes gormless fascination with the man:

> He worked in his bedroom. It smelled of tobacco, for he was a chain smoker. To save money he had bought a machine with which he could roll his own. He would write a line of words, change a line or two, and write the line again. When the sheet was covered he would start another. Absorbed like a child at play, he scarcely noticed the passing of hours, the changing light outside.

Once the life has been dealt with, the work gets similar treatment. But to be fair, Simpson does operate within limits that he clearly defines. Justifying Thomas's work by saying that it "reminded people of what they had forgotten: that poetry can be passionate speech, and that this proceeds from the life of an individual" is to score a hit as low as his aims are set. The trouble is, by asserting the value of feeling as persistently as he does, Simpson disqualifies himself from doing much thinking. In fact, he seems uncertain about the function of criticism altogether. "It is not wrong to interpret the meaning of a poem", he says, "it is only wrong to interpret too much. This is where critics go wrong, and the end of it is that the critic sets himself up in the place of the poet." Fair enough. But it is hardly an excuse for writing a book which veers between flatulent approval and vacant description.

Only in the section on Lowell does Simpson pull himself together. This is not because feeling finds its ideally candid exponent, but because it is continually held in check by the extrapolation of ideas. To put this in Simpson's terms: Lowell's poetry is "heavy with meaning"—particularly in the early volumes, *Land of Unlikeness*, *Lord Weary's Castle* and *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*. Not surprisingly, Simpson makes this his reason for preferring the more intimate, relaxed later ones. But while facts of life rather than "thoughts" become "the pegs to hang poetry on", they never interfere with Lowell's capacity to think openly and profoundly. He does so with a persistence which raises the details of his life to symbolic status, and proves more than a match for Simpson's well-meant emotionalism.

WOULD THAT something could save Michael Riffaterre—not so much from his ideas, as from his method of expressing them.[5] He makes Stanford's extravagances seem reasonable. *Semiotics of Poetry* is an attempt to "propose a coherent and relatively simple description of the structure of meaning in a poem" which is seldom coherent and never simple. Most of the time, it

[4] *Studies of Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell.* By LOUIS SIMPSON. Macmillan, £12.00.

[5] *Semiotics of Poetry.* By MICHAEL RIFFATERRE. Methuen, £4.50.

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reads like the winner of a competition to introduce its subject in the style of Sir Thomas Browne:

> This transfer of a sign from one level of discourse to another, this metamorphosis of what was a signifying complex at a lower level of the text into a signifying unit, now a member of a more developed system, at a higher level of the text, this functional shift is the proper domain of semiotics.

Mimic Heavens

Milton's Century—*By* IAN FLETCHER

THE 17TH CENTURY was a theatre of passion, crisis, and the beginnings of that trust in the sufficiency of human reason that blossomed in "the enlightenment." In this century, it has not surprisingly attracted historians, literary historians and critics in volume, for our present state is one that could be loosely described as a distorted reflex of the *seicento*. Trust in that sufficiency is not quite what it was; Marxism has combined religion and politics in a manner reminiscent of the 17th-century sectaries, but our crises seem severely devoid of that cathartic quality we impute to the Grand Remonstrance, the Restoration, or the Glorious goings-on of 1688, just as the actors who command our stages seem rather dimly charismatic beside those of the 17th century.

The myths, or those fictions that cannot lie—at Whitehall, Rubens' of the apotheosis of King James; Milton's of Love and Death in *Paradise Lost*; King Charles the First's of King Charles the First; Marvell's Cromwell, even the Whig myth of history so robustly epiphanised by the busts of the British Worthies on their temple at Stowe—retain power to exasperate or to charm. And the historians, literary and otherwise, who re-enact events from that time, both physical and mental, often find it agreeable to furnish some myth-making for themselves. Those historians, for example, who find in every hermetic group, under every heretical stone, signs of a proletariat in revolt. Still, we must be grateful for the treasures of quotation of, say, a Christopher Hill, and while ignoring the ideology recognise that it imparts vivacity to the tale. We have our romantic historians quite in the line of Michelet and Carlyle, exalting a Muggleton or a Milton in place of Joan of Arc or Frederick the Great to engineer the human future.

It was a time, indeed, when the best and the worst had all conviction, but too often the recall manifests itself in Pavlovian terms: Ranter, good; High Anglican Arminian Bishop, bad, bad, bad. Yet the Milton, for example, who inhabits Christopher Hill's recent life of Milton is surely recognisable as the poet, not simply acerb and humourless and self-righteous, but one who enjoyed bawdy punning, learned from painful experience, and yet maintained a properly arrogant sense of his own powers to the end. We can recognise in that image the same figure whom Aubrey presented to us, one who pronounced his 'r's exceeding hard: sure sign of a sharp wit, whose presence we can recognise also in the snarled asides of the narrator of *Paradise Lost*: "as well he might", "and with a vengeance", and the tone of "If that way be your walk, you have not far" of old Chaos's remark to Satan in the middle of the dark angel's impressive travels through space towards a distant earth.

AS THE CENTURY'S GREATEST POET, focus on Milton is to be expected; he is also on the side of Reason, Truth, Justice, Freedom and all that. Yet his fortunes this century have been variable. The low point was round 1900 when Sir Walter Raleigh made his famous sub-Arnoldian remark that *Paradise Lost* was "a monument to dead ideas", while at the same time intending no challenge to the poem's greatness. This suggests a hollow Parnassianism: Milton's style is left dangling like the husk of a grasshopper after a hunting wasp has drained its vital juices.

The Grand Style itself came under attack in the 1920s: T. S. Eliot puffing that sound Anglican Donne, dutifully pursued by F. R. Leavis and by A. J. A. Waldock, who first invented the epic Milton had intended to write and then marked the poet down for not achieving it. The problems that *Paradise Lost* has always posed were rehearsed: Milton's involvement emotionally (a natural rebel himself) with Satan; Milton's God (compared by Empson for joviality and cruelty to Stalin); the fact that Satan does not degenerate from within, but is systematically degraded from without; the violation of our human feelings resulting from the poem's condemnation of Adam's choice rather to die with Eve than to abandon her and obey God; the dreariness of some of Book XI and nearly all Book XII (for life ebbs out of the poem with Satan's pan-

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tomime transformation into Kipling's—or Walt Disney's—Ka during Book X).

One of Waldock's suggestions was that Milton became agitated at his own success as Satan's speech writer and attempted to damp down our response with clumsy editorial comment along the lines of "I know he sounds splendid, but don't believe the fellow. Underneath it all, he's in a bad way." And later on Milton makes Satan soliloquise rather as though he were a Machiavelli who had suddenly found himself struggling with the group emotion of a big revival meeting: Satan as the first (lapsed) Christian. But the editorial note in Book I: "So spake the apostate angel, though in pain/Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair", sticks to the facts.

The poet's "presence" in the poem has recently attracted more sophisticated attention, and Christopher Ricks has shown that there are subtle notes of dubiety *within* some of Satan's speeches. Waldock persisted in reading the poem as though it were a realist novel. But however unsympathetic the critics of Milton may have seemed in the 1920s and 1930s, they were passionately engaged and began a process of argument and counter-argument that has persisted, though scholars and critics are rather more cautious now when they approach *Paradise Lost*, and indeed a respectful, perhaps even a cosy and proprietary attitude to the master is now not uncommon.

THERE IS GOOD REASON for this. Over the past 50 years or so, most of the action has left the cisatlantic shore: the Milton workshop has become heavy industry—a collaboration between numerous American universities with luxurious libraries and austere tenure tracks, supported, it goes without saying, by a distinguished tradition of Milton scholarship. Up to 30 books on Milton appeared in 1974 but by 1977 something of a recession had set in, and it was down to 20. Great editions have been mustered; commentaries, as in the splendid Carey and Fowler edition, have been elaborated; a "modern" Milton has been presented in the Cambridge edition generally edited by J. B. Broadbent—both British efforts. Sources have been keenly exposed; typologists have appeared showing that rather like the Highland Scots everyone is related to everyone else several thousand years back; structuralists have come, visited *Paradise Lost*, like Satan visiting Chaos, and have passed on. The old problems remain, though the poem, like all great art, continuously gives itself to generation after generation of readers, without diminishing its disturbing substance: theme, pattern, structure, narrative—it can furnish them at need.

Faced with such a volume of volumes, generalisation is absurd, for merely to list those who have engaged with *Paradise Lost* this century is to summon Dominations and Powers: Empson, Kermode, Northrop Frye, and so on. But I may perhaps cite one or two critics whose work seems to be specially influential just now. One is Stanley E. Fish, whose *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* appeared in 1967. Our difficulties with *Paradise Lost*, Fish tells us, "are the result of the act that is the poem's subject." The reader reads and, like the fallen angels entering Pandemonium, hastily admires; then comes the authorial slap and with it the reader's realisation that he himself, like the fallen angels, has been seduced by Satan's heroics. And when we sympathise with Adam's decision to join Eve at her disastrous lunch party, the human race had better hang together than hang separately, Fish tells us that Milton's aim is to force the reader—ourselves, yes—to "invert" the laws of our fallen nature. A real action sermon.

Whether this Protestant response will find a corresponding response in our morally eroded age, I hardly know. But long before I read *Surprised by Sin*, I was myself something of an Icthyologist. I can recall sitting through a lecture by a smartish old new critical Oxbridge sort of a person who told us at length about the general badness of style in *Paradise Regained* and among his quotations was:

> *Full forty days he passed, whether on hill*
> *Sometimes, anon in shady vale, each night*
> *Under the covert of some ancient oak,*
> *Or cedar, to defend him from the dew,*
> *Or harboured in one cave, is not revealed. . . .*

As Bertie Wooster might have put it, rather scaly stuff. That last phrase, tacked so cackhandedly on, we were told, was all too typical of the frequent anticlimaxes in *Paradise Regained*. But surely what happens is that just as one is getting rather interested in precisely how Jesus *did* spend his nights, Milton, who had been a schoolmaster after all, brings down the ferrule: "not revealed *to you*", and there can be no doubt that Milton and God knew what they were doing, for a few lines earlier Jesus had observed: "Perhaps I need not know/For what concerns my knowledge God reveals." You need those stuttering "ors" to get you tied up in wanting forbidden knowledge.

Another good and highly documented way of helping one to get along with Milton's handling of Satan (though not with Milton's God) and with the War in Heaven—all those half-liquid angels encysted in solid armour forged by Homer, Ariosto, Spenser—appears in several books by John M. Steadman. What Steadman suggests is that *Paradise Lost* is an anti-epic or counter-epic "undermining the established epic tradition by destroying its ethical foundations." So the poet has his aesthetic cake and eats it. The models—Homer, Virgil, Tasso and the rest—are used and, as Milton

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tells us in the invocation to Book IX, "overgone." Pagan beauty, epic simile, martial valour: they are all there. Put another way, so that Milton's earlier work gets involved: "art" necessarily imitates "nature", but nature, like man, has "fallen." What represents that fallen nature, a Comus, or the savage idiot music of the sea in *Lycidas*, provides the initial energy: "Virtue", as Milton notes in the first entry in his Commonplace Book, "is attested by evil, is illuminated and trained." That is why God permits it. The activity of the tempters produces self-knowledge and reaction: man knows good through evil.

Milton's art, then, is essentially polemical, "overgoing" the royal form of masque (contaminated with pastoral drama) so that *Comus* is displayed and "corrected" while in *Lycidas* the pastoral voices and rituals are rehearsed for the last time (one of several plays on that opening phrase "once more") before being transcended by purer affirmations and then admitted once more but as a fiction that may lie: if Edward King is to be the guardian of Britain against the seas that touch the enemy shores, the shepherd himself will now sing only of the one true happy garden, and of its final spoliation, and the recovery of "paradise" within the self.

EVEN AFTER THESE YEARS of intensive work, much remains to be recovered and perhaps some of the more valuable assays are those that approach the master obliquely. Roland Frye's book, for example, on *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts*[1] was quite in the grand style, a true *livre d'occasion* (almost a foot square) which displays for us the mostly Italian images that may well have entered Milton's own art. Most importantly, the tone of this book is persuasive rather than dogmatic; but it represents ten years of work well accomplished. Some recent material on Milton, however, strikes one as suffering from giganticism: articles, or congeries of articles exhaled into a book. And sadly this applies to both Louis Martz's *Poet of Exile*[2] and to Murray Roston's *Milton and the Baroque*.

To those who know Martz's earlier books, *Poet of Exile* will disappoint because much of it readers will already have encountered, less floridly presented, less pertinaciously tessellated. Mr Martz, in fact, is rather a pluralist. His brief chapter on *Paradise Regained*, for example, began life as an essay in *English Literary History* way back in 1960, was encapsulated as larval form in *The*

[1] Roland Frye, *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts* (Princeton University Press, 1978).

[2] *Poet of Exile: A Study of Milton's Poetry*. By LOUIS L. MARTZ. Yale University Press, £14.20, $22.10.

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Paradise Within of 1964 and arrived at its winged apotheosis in *Poet of Exile* some 16 years later. But there is little difference between the larva and the butterfly, though the piece continues more elaborately to distort *Paradise Regained* by its insistence on "interiority" (the theme, needless to say, of *The Paradise Within*) and necessarily mutes the historicity of the poem. Here, the tendentious historian is closer to the poem than the literary critic: Christopher Hill's account in his biography of Milton stresses the documentary life of *Paradise Regained* without muting "interiority."

Poet of Exile wavers between topics Martz feels impelled to accent—pastoral and "exile", Milton and Ovid, for example—and a purported general account of the poet's major works. This structure is assisted by much reliance on recent scholarship both Eng. Lit. and classical, and Mr Martz is candid, not to say effusive, about keeping up. His notes are resonant with baroque courtesies: hardly a book or an article lacks its "brilliant", "acute", "searching and wholly convincing", "excellent" and, when specially moved, "definitive." If perhaps a shade less enthusiastic, "interesting" will serve, while there are awful and rare occasions where an article is alluded to with a nudity that must be shaming to its unfortunate author. A very Eisenhower among academics; and the book, as one might expect, is charmingly written. The problem is, as the *Paradise Regained* essay witnesses, in spite of keeping up and, as it were, lining his nest, Mr Martz has nothing new to add to his earlier, excellent books, though it should be said that some recent studies have tended to fault those for ignoring Protestantism and context. Evading Protestantism is something we would all like to do, doubtless, but by so doing, we evade Milton. However, Mr Martz is far too old a hand not to see that this is no book, this is good old wine in borrowed bottles.

PART ONE OF *Poet of Exile* makes a fair gesture of coverage through the complex and indeed dramatic ordering of the 1645 volume; this has been done before, but not as agreeably and elaborately. The theme is the progress of the poet towards a conscious maturity and the awareness of a world of culture lost. The other and connected gesture is through Arcadia. Cunningly Mr Martz describes Theocritus in terms of *Comus*: in the Idylls, country bounty is indeed full, unwithdrawn, but never overwhelms, for eating is accompanied with prayer, drinking with song. And the "all giver" is thanked by man's profound appreciation, not only by the act of consumption. It is this pastoral music that Milton will perform to answer the parody of nature's bounty in *Comus*, through the healing power, Orphic, of music and of song. This begs a little the question of whether Theocritus's Arcadia is not already "lost" since, as in Virgil's, we can still recognise physical landscapes, and their presence in the eclogues suggests a more complex relation. The omission of Virgil in the argument makes a shapelier antithesis.

The Orphic note has been touched by criticism a good many times before, but it is welcome to find the pastoral elements of *Comus* restressed, while relating Comus's opening speech to the lyric movement of the Anacreontic is a real insight. And certainly, as Mr Martz argues, the "ear" is the highest sense in the wood and rescue will come by music; the corruption of Nature is indicated by Echo's song being answered by the enchanter himself. Mr Martz suggests interestingly that the stabbing stichomythia passage between Comus and the Lady "creates a touch of 'ill-beseeming artifice' that stresses the illusory quality of the scene: such dialogue belongs to a genre widely differing from pastoral." A false higher note one might say: Milton severely controls his *contaminatio*, though the main purpose of the alternate lines must still be to show (by the formal means Milton prefers) the Lady coming under Comus's power. Still, the actual argument of Comus, its topicality, along with the many themes of *Lycidas*, Britain, responsibility, Protestantism, remain alien to Martz so that the two works appear in this account as strangely weightless. Even the notion of pastoral emerges as narrow, neither useful nor definitive.

IF THE WORK on the earlier poetry is too narrow, his account of *Paradise Lost* is too various: a fair review of several fashionable and critical attitudes; the "presence" of the poet in his poem. We now respond to several speakers in *Paradise Lost*, as in *Lycidas*; baroque panels, parodic discords repeated from the structure of succeeding books in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Mr Martz is careful to use the second edition of Brooks Otis's *Ovid as Epic Poet* ("controversial, stimulating"), where the author amazingly retracted all his criticisms of Ovid's inflated style and conceded that the poet was deliberately parodying Virgil and Homer. What has happened, I think, is that Martz has read Steadman and then Otis, and has found that Milton and Ovid share anti-heroic characteristics: good stuff for an article, but there are numerous pages on Ovid in *Poet of Exile*.

As for the chapter on *Samson Agonistes*, that wastes most of its time grumbling about the bad rhymes of the middle choruses (these grumbles are substantially repeated from an essay in *Milton Studies* of 1969, based on a lecture delivered in 1968, though a new conclusion has been added, which looks back to the first half of the book and compares the volume of 1671 with those of 1667

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and 1645). Mr Martz seems to be in dialogue with Arnold Stein, who suggested that Samson's conquest of himself and consequent death on active service uplifted both Manoa and the chorus into a state of heroic knowledge. Mr Martz's approach determines that the most Samson's "interior" victory can achieve for Manoa is partial illumination and half truth while the chorus are "strengthened." This seems to me a half-truth of Mr Martz's. The splendour of the verse spells affirmation: "no time for lamentation now,/Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself like Samson."

Perhaps neither Samson nor the chorus grasps the full significance of Samson's victory, but while it may be more Greek to suggest that there *is* much for tears, much that is *not* well and fair, and that it is only half true to put the stress on how God has borne witness to "his faithful Champion" rather than on the way in which the faithful man has borne witness to God, to do so is the less Christian. Samson himself has recognised that all the contest is now between God and Dagon; in the will of that living Dread the hero has found his peace, and the Chorus's final chorus—"all is best"—echoes the discovery that "and all this is Zeus", returning the play to the ancient models.

As to the bad rhymes of the middle choruses, I can only say that the Connecticut ear is more sensitive than mine to "ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds." I can find two pairs of rhymes which, because they follow one another, are perhaps bad: the sequence of "mute" and "brute", "rout" and "about." To suggest that something is deliberately bad is dangerously reminiscent of that drunken keeper of the crumbling embankment in Peacock's *Misfortunes of Elphin*, the great Seithenyn:

> the parts that are rotten give elasticity to those that are sound, if it were all sound it would break with its obstinate stiffness. The soundness is checked by the rottenness and the stiffness is balanced by the elasticity.

Where Manoa goes wrong is where Milton *may* go wrong: in the passages about the virgins visiting Samson's tomb with flowers, rather as if the end of *Hippolytus* were being rewritten, and in Manoa's injured father's insistence on Samson's "lot unfortunate in nuptial choice" when Samson has already told him that they were really God's choices.

That Mr Martz is honourably worrying away at the Miltonic problems will be clear, and he has a good idea when it comes to finding something to say for Book XI of *Paradise Lost* by calling up Dryden's notion of the "Legislative style" which "ought to be Plain and Natural and yet Majestic; for here the Poet is presumed to be a kind of Lawgiver." The style is indeed achieved in Dryden's

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Religio Laici, but about Book XI I remain less sure.

DOUBTS ABOUT WHAT IS or is not a book are again raised by Murray Roston's *Milton and the Baroque*.[3] Mr Roston recognises the dangers of a chatty *Kulturgeschichte* and claims to use Baroque art not as a loose analogy to Milton's grand style and structure but to open new perspectives on the problems of *Paradise Lost*. Baroque as a European movement expressing itself over nearly two centuries principally through architecture, painting and sculpture is a tricky label for literature. One should also recognise that it is a label imposed on the past, beginning with Wölfflin's famous *Renaissance und Barock* in 1888, which distinguished the two styles. Since that time, an intermediate style, Mannerism, has been discovered, one in which works of art constantly tend towards disequilibrium owing to their internal tensions, whereas Baroque works to embody the tensions and transcend them. Additionally, the close connections between Baroque and the Counter-Reformation have been recognised: for its central tenet, Transubstantiation, is a microcosm of the Baroque spirit, an acceptance of the sacramentalisation of matter, the violent collision of matter and spirit.

Mr Roston's argument begins from the notion that Milton's Baroque is part of a wide response to the vivid energy revealed by Copernicus's infinite universe. The Church, however, assimilated Copernican theory with ease: had not the Old Testament told of a Creator who stretched out the Heavens like a curtain, hung the earth upon nothing, bent the Pleiades and loosed the bands of Orion? Nor did Kepler's discovery that the orbits of the planets were oval disturb; the oval, not the perfect circle, is reproduced in those mimic heavens on the roofs of many Baroque churches. Mr Roston, like Wölfflin, draws sharp distinctions between Renaissance calm and Baroque tumult. A battle piece by Raphael shows St George calmly assured of victory; a battle piece by Rubens (or by Milton) shows that victory of the good angels is assured only after violent effort, so that God's power and dignity are confirmed by Satan's stature as a worthy antagonist. Like Rubens, Milton has a serene confidence in matter, the more of it in tastable flesh the better; thus the material glitter of Milton's Heaven and the materiality of his angels.

Milton, Mr Roston suggests, is responding not merely to a general current of sensibility but to specific works of art, and the voyage to Italy marks a decisive break in his style. This chronology reduces *Lycidas* to a gentle reminiscence in the quiet Renaissance mode. *Lycidas* is all poems to all men: the contrast of physical violence and spiritual landscape and reconciliation with matter, the genius of the shore, might suggest the Baroque, while the unrhymed lines and abrupt modulations from mood to mood suggested a mannerist idiom to Wylie Sypher, one of Mr Roston's sources. If we go in for this sort of thing we must take Milton's Baroque still further back, to the "Nativity Ode" of 1629, where the Hercules image, the masque allusions, and the poet stemming time and "preventing" the angelic tribute all seem characteristic of the style, though Christ's visit to "a darksome house of clay" marries Spenser and Manichaeism.

SOME OF Mr Roston's more rolling generalisations tend to be toned down if one reads Philip Fehl's fascinating piece about Poetry and the entry of the fine arts into England which appears in *The Age of Milton*,[4] an excellent set of essays by various hands on music, philosophy, theology, rhetoric, law, and so forth. Professor Fehl is rather less sure about whether the Baroque masters were really being Baroque.

Milton shares with Rubens, Mr Roston tells us, an attraction to chiaroscuro, hence the presentation of God in Book III of *Paradise Lost* as intolerable Light. It is this drama of light and dark that distinguishes stormy Baroque from tepid Renaissance. Through Fehl, we learn that Lomazzo's *Trattato dell' Arte della Pittura* of 1584, just within the Baroque period (according to Wölfflin anyway), finds "beautiful words for the effect on the heart that Correggio and Titian can produce by the painting of light, that of the sun and the heavens, and on clouds, and of darknesses."

Fehl also reminds us that the arch Baroque master, Bernini, did not regard himself as moving away from the "harmonies" of Palladio, and instances the restrained Tuscan colonnades of St Peter's (Milton never saw them), wide in their sweep, and a prelude in grandeur and simplicity to the glory of the church's interior and Michelangelo's dome. As to the towering *baldacchino* (this Milton must have seen)—though as tall as a palace, it is perfectly in scale with the dome under which it rises. Evidence can always be brought to render ambitious generalisations suspect, and non-specialists had better steer clear of other disciplines when they want to make points about their own; but take away all the amusing art history and not much is left of *Milton and the Baroque*.

[3] *Milton and the Baroque*. By MURRAY ROSTON. Macmillan Press, £12.00.

[4] *The Age of Milton: Backgrounds to Seventeenth Century Literature*. Edited by C. A. PATRIDES and RAYMOND B. WADDINGTON. Manchester University Press, £22.50.

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MURRAY ROSTON'S CLAIMS pass beyond any suggestion that the characteristics he singles out in *Paradise Lost* are partly the result of Milton's careful thought about apt imitation and partly the result of his rational theology. And he has a problem—the Baroque characteristics he describes disappear halfway through the poem: how can a poem be half Baroque and half not? Mr Roston is before us: he has another set of Baroque characteristics up his sleeve which will cover the Creation sequence and Eden—Baroque is remarkable for its expression of earth's fertility no less than heaven's energy. Then what about Book XI and Book XII?—that bleak space largely occupied by a guided tour through the gloomier bits of the Old Testament.

Mr Roston is apt in at least one of the characteristics of the Baroque: illusionism. He rapidly disinters an old book by A. H. Gilbert on the composition of *Paradise Lost* and declares that this tells us that the two last books were written first, the first two books last. But can we believe Gilbert, even though Mr Roston tells us that he is "widely accepted"? The resemblances of style between Books XI and XII and *Paradise Regained* are clear. The central weakness of *Milton and the Baroque*, finally, comes from underestimating, like Louis Martz, Milton's sense of evil active in the world.

ANOTHER MAN naturally on our side is the prole John Bunyan, but the first of the two volumes of recently edited miscellaneous works,[5] part of a 17-volume edition, is likely to alarm the unconverted. It consists of three tracts: the first hurls texts at the Quakers whose theology seems tepid enough: the Bible is not the inspired work of God; every man has the Spirit of God, grace, faith, etc; the inner light; the resurrection has already happened in every believer and there is no final judgment. It all has the cosy touch of Bishop Robinson's *Honest to God*. The second tract gives answers to the Quakers' answers, and the third—*A Few Sighs from Hell, or the Groans of a Damned Soul*—is 150 pages of trying to make the flesh creep; Joyce's Jesuit does it better in a tenth the time. Both as literature and as theology this stuff seems dead.

Bunyan's poems are again carefully edited, but hardly better. Graham Midgley is temperate about their worth, but seems to assume that once we know about the genres (those awful broadside ballads and the gross underbelly of the fable tra-

[5] *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*. Volume I. Edited by T. L. UNDERWOOD and ROGER SHARROCK. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £25. Volume VI. *Poems*. Edited by GRAHAM MIDGLEY. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £20.00.

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dition) all will be pardoned. Emblem Book joins fable as model for *A Book for Boys and Girls* which, aside from the Shepherd's song in the Valley of Humiliation, contains about all of Bunyan's verse that remains readable, even to those with the appetite of a circular saw for the subcultural. We are reminded now and then of that tenuous trickle that runs and gathers much strength from Bunyan through Watts to Blake when we come across lines such as:

When Adam was deceived,
I was of life bereaved;
Of late (too) I perceived
I was in sin conceived.

and so gloomily on for 27 more stanzas. Now and then there are possible moments culled from the humble familiar objects a child might respond to, or sinewy colloquial epithets like "the slabby rain"; still, I wonder who, apart from specialists in the history of religious education, is ever going to read through this stuff.

Coleridge's distinction between the Bunyan of genius and the Bunyan of the conventicle is apt. Apart from passages in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding*, all of Bunyan belongs to the conventicle and should have disappeared with it. The story of his first marriage to a girl so poor and obscure that her very name has been lost and who brought him as her only dowry two manuals of piety is rather touching, and he died sacrificially in a manner quite like Marius the Epicurean; but why he should be dignified with this 17-volume enterprise I can't imagine, when so many better writers languish inedited. The hymns of Samuel Crossman are worth fifty of Bunyan's:

My song is love unknown;
My saviour's love to me.
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
Oh who am I
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die. . . .

But Crossman was an Anglican, an educated man, and had a Prebendal stall in Bristol Cathedral, so naturally he hasn't been reprinted for more than 100 years.

DOUBTS ABOUT AUDIENCE are renewed, though for different reasons, by Michael Craze's book on Marvell.[6] Mr Craze was a schoolmaster for 40 years and his book is a consequence of long, close,

[6] *The Life and Lyrics of Andrew Marvell.* By MICHAEL CRAZE. Macmillan Press, £12.00.

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and often rewarding hours with Marvell's text. His approach, though, resembles that of the author of a sophisticated crib. Poems are construed line by line, by groups of stanzas, so that identifying the trees tends to make one lose all sense of the wood when entered on such a lengthy and complex poem as "Upon Appleton House." And paraphrase means there is one meaning to be extrapolated and one only, though Mr Craze sometimes admits that he doesn't know the true reading: he certainly knows not Sir William Empson or the subjunctive mood. It is only fair to record that what he does know are the classics, the niceties of 17th-century grammar, Marvell's biography, and the manuscript evidence (though I've no doubt the catalogue of the recent tercentenary edition helped). This pays off in solution of some cruces and difficulties of interpretation.

Marvell is a really difficult poet, partly of course because of the strong dialectic movement, those deceptive syllogisms he inherited from Donne. He is now paired with Milton, but though he responded vigorously to late Milton, his own work, apart from sharing the theme of contemplation versus action, seems quite other. I cannot see him as an ideologue.

He has also been seen as a type of the anxiety, described by Harold Bloom, which leads a poet to practise a creative "swerve" to suppress a predecessor and rival, particularly when—like Marvell—he is acutely conscious of his historical position. It is always necessary (as Oscar Wilde remarked when someone accused him of plagiarising Flaubert) to kill one's father, and one does so by parody, distortion, carrying to absurd extremes. So many of Marvell's poems seem to be a critical response to *topoi* within the conventions of the commonplaces he is testing, though Mr Craze reads them more biographically. Favoured devices are the circular structure where the poet attempts to evade an inevitable ending, but may be ironically surprised by being overcome by banality: yes, death is a mower too. Other poems like "The Gallery" startle dead modes into newer life.

Often Marvell's wit seems to turn on itself, so that in a poem like "The Garden" he simultaneously asserts and then undermines the contemplative life he is wittily defending. Indeed, recent criticism has suggested that he is disconcertingly modern in attempting to end poems inconclusively (as though with a sigh or a shrug of dots) and the circularity of some poems at least guarantees form. In a commentary, therefore, it is necessary to be alert not merely to classical references and to earlier English, but also to continental models. Saint Amant is mentioned only once by Mr Craze, while Marino (who devoted a whole volume to the Gallery or imaginary museum), and Le Moyne (who prolonged the tradition) appear not at all. "The Gallery" survives freestanding from its genre, but a

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reading is enriched by setting this poem against earlier treatments of the theme: art is more vivid than life. Mr Craze prefers another approach;

> Did the shepherdess come from real life? Marvell never married in all his 57 years. But many a bachelor was in love once and men have a way of remembering their first sight of the girl in their lives. . . . If "The Gallery" is entirely fictional, however, one can almost admire it the more from coming so close to real life.

I DISAGREE WITH some of Mr Craze's general readings. In "The Garden" he concludes that Marvell is wittily making a solo Paradise of his own which will stand comparison with the solo Paradise of Adam before he lost his rib. Stopping there seems to make the poem too much a simple debating exercise and slurs the underlying pull back from contemplation to action. Mr Craze usefully translates for us the Latin version of the poem and once or twice uses it to fetch out puns. However, in the English version Marvell undercuts the claims for "retreat" by mild overstatement and the use of ambiguous words like "rude", by the touch of complacency in the image of the bird "preening" after a successful take-off into the Platonic yonder; while the flippancy of the attack on women appears to disable the case so dextrously argued.

About the ambiguities of the word "Fall" Mr Craze is silent.

> *What wondrous life is this I lead . . .*
> *The Nectarine and curious peach*
> *Into my hands themselves do reach;*
> *Stumbling on melons as I pass,*
> *Insnared with flowers I fall on grass.*

The first line commits the speaker to self-satisfaction; the fall seems harmless. As a sensitive interpreter, Douglas Brown, once put it: "a gay mime of the Fall of Man . . . the poet here is a voluptuary . . . not an innocent contemplator" even if earlier on the innocence had suggested naivety. "The Garden", Brown continued, "has suddenly taken on a dangerous life of its own: Curious—stumbling—ensnared . . . a wonderfully mounting and delicate sequence leading to the word 'Fall' in such a way as the Fall is not a Fall of light consequence." Eve after all fell through curiosity, the first degree of pride. The nectarines and peaches which so obligingly "reach" themselves into the poet's hands parody Adam's excuse that Eve gave to him and he did eat. And at the end of the poem emblems of time and so of responsibility and action reassert themselves. And if "green" in the third stanza is, as Mr Craze says, Marvell's favourite colour associated with quiet, withdrawal, harmonious nature, it is also the colour of jealousy and desperate passion.

As a schoolmaster, Mr Craze may well prefer to ignore the coarser aspects: he has no comment on the line about "thirty thousand to the rest" and then there are the famous lines about tearing pleasures with rough strife through "the iron gates of life." Mr Craze observes that Marvell uses the iron gates in a Latin poem, drawing on Lucan, and to "unlock the gates of life" means "to die", and no pun intended. So the lines read:

> Since the lovers . . . are "at once" to devour their time and not to be slowly devoured, one can infer that the iron gates of life . . . are to be their exit up to the sky, their way of escape from this life. They are, of their own volition, to finish with this world and with time.

And lest we think all this is too much like space travel, Mr Craze quotes from Marvell's contemporary John Hall: "O, let us tear/A passage through/That floating vault above." Like Milton, Marvell was not averse to bawdy, and if this interpretation is right then it reminds me of that amazing drawing of Charles Kingsley's, showing himself and his wife Fanny, winged, naked, and gently copulating as they ascend to Heaven. However Richard Lovelace, another contemporary, and one closer to Marvell, has a poem about Lucasta taking the waters at Tunbridge Wells and this describes the fortunate fluid as visiting her "rosy gates." The religious temperament of Marvell invests the *carpe diem* theme with strange rigour; the gates are those of the vault and of the womb; lust and death in one place—and there is also that tall rocky gorge in the Danube known as "The Iron Gate" where navigation, until recent years, has been extremely difficult.

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Experts for Export

Encounters with China & Japan—By ANTHONY THWAITE

THE FOREIGNER in China today isn't a *yang guizi* ("foreign devil"), but he is likely to have a reputation for being infernally clever. Two illustrations. First, my uncle's family happened to be away from home for a few days at the time of the great 1976 Tangshan earthquake. They came back to Peking to find rubble everywhere, tents and temporary shelters in the middle of the streets, though their own house wasn't badly damaged. Almost at once they were confronted with such reactions as, "You, being foreign, must have *known* the earthquake was coming, so . . ."—not an accusation of devilish wiliness but an acknowledgment of uncanny prescience. Then there was the story, told us by an interpreter, of how she acted as guide in 1975 to a British political/historical academic "expert", who foresaw the fall of the Gang of Four and told her what would happen. The interpreter didn't at the time dare to say a word, to the "expert" or anyone else; but thought later, after the event, "what a brilliant prognostication—it needed a foreigner to do it!"

These stories unpleasantly remind me of one told by Arthur Miller in *Chinese Encounters*.[1] Miller was asked to watch a performance by the Peking People's Art Theatre of a play by Guo Moruo, directed by China's leading living playwright, Cao Yu (we ourselves saw a performance of Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm*). Asked his opinion, Miller reported that he found it boring. Why? Because it was repetitive:

> "Cao Yu let a split second of silence pass. Then, shouting 'Hurrah!' he sprang up while the cast burst into applause and nodded deeply towards me, immensely pleased. 'Here we are for six months trying to figure out why this play is so boring and he sees it at once and tells us!'
>
> A great babble of voices now as the actors with the greatest of pleasure blamed their author in a rapid dialogue whose familiar implications I found myself understanding even before Su Yuang could translate them."

It is easy for the foreigner nowadays in China to be self-congratulatory: one is given every opportunity. In the volatile exuberance that followed the fall of the Gang and the consequent opening-up to the "Four Modernisations", the atmosphere has been comparable, perhaps, with the Meiji Restoration in Japan in 1868, when foreign ideas—as well as foreign inventions and actual foreigners—so flooded the country that it seemed at one time as if everything Japanese would be thrown out with the Shogunate. China, as we saw it, is full of British engineers, delegations of Australian farmers, German businessmen, coachloads of American and Japanese tourists, and "experts" from almost everywhere except the Soviet Union and its allies. It seems that any foreigner in China who isn't a tourist must be an "expert."

MALCOLM BRADBURY AND I are presumably "experts" on recent British literature. A quick trot from Amis *père* to Amis *fils*, an overview of Modernism/Post-Modernism, a filling-in of the map from Dylan Thomas (a sedulous rendering of "Do

ANTHONY THWAITE *and Malcolm Bradbury were recently invited by the Chinese Ministry of Culture, through the agency of the Great Britain-China Centre in London, to visit Guangzhou (formerly Canton), Chengdu (capital of Sichuan province), Shanghai, and Peking. They were asked to give lectures and take seminars on post-war British literature in universities, and to meet writers, editors, publishers, and producers. At the end of the official programme, Thwaite stayed on in Peking for a further week at the house of an uncle-by-marriage—an American who has lived in China for twenty-two years, until recently working as an economic adviser to the Chinese government. Thwaite then went on to give lectures and conduct seminars for the British Council in Japan, where he had taught at Tokyo University from 1955–1957. This article draws on his experiences in both countries.*

[1] *Chinese Encounters*. By ARTHUR MILLER and INGE MORATH. Secker & Warburg, £12.50.

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not go gentle" was a staple for several thousand miles through China) to Seamus Heaney—it was all familiar British Council-type stuff. But why did they want it, and what was it for? The whole time we were told how welcome we were "because you tell us of the latest developments, of which we are ignorant." Such a notion—which makes literature seem like science, something that "develops" and "progresses"—is, I suppose, part of the whole Marxist evolutionary ethos, reinforced by Mao's remarks at the Yenan forum in 1942 (". . . the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form"). In most universities we were told that they knew nothing about British literature after about 1900, with the exception of a bit of Galsworthy and Shaw, and the names of Eliot and Joyce. (We admitted now and then that our knowledge of Chinese literature after the Tang period was even worse; it's amazing and shameful how one can coast along with nothing but a handful of Waley versions somewhere in one's memory, and even those imperfectly remembered.)

At Peking University, we had a discussion with half-a-dozen postgraduates in the English department, setting out to write their theses: Shakespearean tragedy; George Eliot; Arthur Miller (who seemed a bit taken aback by the almost total ignorance of his work when he arrived in China in the autumn of 1978); Byron; *Paradise Lost*; D. H. Lawrence. The students' main difficulty was lack of books, so many were physically destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The woman working on George Eliot didn't know what to do, what line to take, because she hadn't even finished reading the novels: *Middlemarch* was next on the list. The Cultural Revolution came just as she had finished her undergraduate course; for the next three years she "worked in the fields" (a phrase that came to haunt us at every turn in China), and then spent the next seven years teaching in a middle school in a remote province. At the age of 30 or so, she was just beginning again.

Others who were university students in 1966 were even less fortunate. A whole generation missed university altogether—or rather, they "attended" and were given degrees, but these are now regarded as not worth the paper they're written on because they represent no study or work, except time spent "in the fields" or in the factories. This lost generation—in their late twenties to late thirties—often married and had children and family responsibilities, so that by 1976–77 they couldn't go back to university. One woman told us that, among the intellectuals, "the old were persecuted and the young deprived."

PERSECUTION was a constant topic. Whenever we had our meetings with writers and university teachers, the stories would pour out. In Shanghai, for example, there was a senior novelist, Wang Xiyan, who has been writing since the 1930s but who between 1957 and 1976 could not publish; and in June 1966 he was the first writer to be publicly attacked in the Writers Association building in Shanghai. At first he was in a "cow stall"—an expression that became familiar—where he was called an animal and treated like one; later he was in prison. Wang was forced to wear a placard round his neck, labelled with his name and his offences: counter-revolutionary revisionist: anti-party anti-socialist; bourgeois reactionary author; old hand in anti-communist activities; following the wrong literary line (the "black line") in the 1930s; and veteran revisionist. (Repetitiveness and overlapping seem characteristic of Chinese denunciatory rhetoric.) The simplest overall label he carried on a board above his head: EVIL SPIRIT—WANG. He was ordered to clean lavatories, to expose his crimes in public in one of the big Writers Association rooms and to do the same in a theatre, when his performance was televised.

One of the first eight writers to be accused in Shanghai committed suicide, and later several critics and poets did the same. But no novelists, Wang said; they were made of tougher stuff. Not that he confessed to what was considered his worst crime, the use of a phrase referring to the Ching dynasty which was taken to be a libel against Chairman Mao and the Central Committee; for if he had confessed to this interpretation it would certainly have meant execution. Incarcerated with another senior novelist, Ba Jin, and forced daily to write criticisms of their own writings as "poisonous weeds", Wang whispered to Ba Jin: "Should we denounce all our work in this way?"

"We should trust to history: history will give the correct judgment."

Such a phrase recalls the reported dying words of Liu Shaoqi, posthumously rehabilitated just as we arrived in China: according to his widow, he said, "History will be written by the people. I have

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been true to the Chinese people. . . ." As an English writer who had taught in China during 1972–74 put it to me, the Chinese "seem to need to justify a feeling of present correctness with a total sloughing off of each previous decade." Ai Qing, an elderly poet who teaches classical literature in Peking, simply said that what the past ten years had shown was "an animal spirit" as opposed to a human one. Now the issue was "telling the truth."

During the Gang period, and even before, in the field of creative writing people were told to eulogise—"which does not mean telling the whole truth." But (almost as an afterthought) "in telling the truth, one should have regard to the social effects. . . ."

I LOOKED FOR SIGNS of possible manoeuvre and heterodoxy within this changed atmosphere, but they seemed not to exist, or even be understood, in the new euphoria, with writers old and young taking as their subject matter the iniquities and sufferings of the Gang period. "Once again", said another poet triumphantly, "we are taking up *human nature*—because once there were people who negated it." In Shanghai we had a long private discussion with two novelists of 30, a young man and woman who had started writing in 1977 and who had a considerable degree of success. (This was one of the few occasions on which Malcolm Bradbury and I relied not on an official Ministry of Culture interpreter, but on our other companion throughout the tour, David Pollard, Professor of Chinese at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies.) The young man said that in China now there was absolute freedom to write in any style or form, but that he had discovered "in the country" (where he worked in a "national minority area" for seven years) that "the preference of the masses is for clear-cut stories with a beginning, middle, and end, and a quite monolithic subject." This was evidently the sort of thing he supplied. The young woman, on the other hand, added that this isn't a necessary condition, that they even had "stream of consciousness", which she preferred, though she knew such stories wouldn't have wide appeal.

It was at this point that she suddenly looked extremely ill at ease, or perhaps just ill, and sank into silence—as if beset by memories of the former consequences of speaking too freely, with the possibility that something would be reported on. The discussion was tugged back by the young man, who said that if the situation stays stable he can see great developments. When I questioned "if the situation stays stable . . .", he thought that the prospects were comparatively good, that he and the rest of his generation had "gone through it" during the Gang period, that now he felt "comparatively close" to the workers and peasants and that they shared his feeling.

STABILITY, not rocking the boat, seems to be a self-regulating wish. When I asked in Peking about the whole matter of the Democracy Wall and the recent ban on "big character posters", I was told that such manifestations of so-called freedom often "told lies", "tried to stir up trouble", "encouraged violence"; and when I asked about the conviction of Wei Jingsheng (jailed for fifteen years a few months before our arrival), I was given the official government version—that he'd been "selling military secrets to foreigners." Challenged about this (I said that it was ridiculous, he was an ordinary electrician and therefore what "military secrets" could he possibly know), the response was a dark one: "We don't know everything about what such people did in the past." Democracy Wall itself, or its original site, is both much longer and much lower than I'd supposed: a greyish-yellow expanse of brick, between a bus depot and what is now a band of newly planted trees, close to the Xidan crossroads in the middle of Peking. There's nothing to see but the few remnants of bits of stuck-on paper. The present "official" wall is tucked away in Yuetan Park and is hardly used: anything posted there must be clearly signed by its author, and it

WHITE AMONG THE REDS

by Masha Williams

Masha Williams served in Vienna as a Russian interpreter for the British in the Allied Commission for Austria in 1945–6. Relations between the Western Allies and the Soviets were hampered by mutual hostility and suspicion of each other's intentions, by different standards of behaviour and by the initial failure of the West to realise how much more savage the war had been on the Eastern Front. This governed the Russians' attitude towards the repatriation of the Vlassov men and their treatment of the Austrians.

Despite her reservations as a White Russian, Masha Williams gained the confidence of the Soviet generals (no doubt the fact that her great-grandfather, Ivan Poustchine, had been a famous 19th century Russian revolutionary reassured them) who, in conversation with her out of earshot of the NKVD, were remarkably frank in their comments on East-West relations.

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would be unlikely for anyone to put anything in the slightest way heterodox.

IN SPITE OF the official discouragement of sloganising implied by the ban on "big character posters" (those *1984*-like emblems of the Cultural Revolution), there seems to be a bland acceptance of—and blindness to—a small set of approved phrases, such as the huge billboards at airports and in the foyers of the hotels in which "foreign guests" are housed: WE HAVE FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD and other proclamations of sweet pabulum. Hearing (as we did almost every day) the repeated phrase "The Four Modernisations", Malcolm Bradbury said to one of our companions. "We keep on hearing this phrase, but I'm afraid I've forgotten what exactly the Four Modernisations are. . . ." She turned pale: "Well, there's Industry . . . and Agriculture . . . and. . . ." There was an embarrassed silence for some time, and then: "I'm sorry, I can't at the moment remember the other two." (They are, in fact, Science & Technology, and Defence.) One might compare asking a Roman Catholic to enumerate the Seven Deadly Sins.

In his acute memoir[2] of his three periods in China (1965–67, briefly in 1974, finally in 1976–77), the Danish novelist and playwright Jan Bredsdorff writes that:

> "Foreigners, broadly speaking, are divided into four grades which, if one begins with the lowest, are: 'foreign guest', 'friendly person', 'foreign friend', and finally, for the relevant political VIP, 'foreign comrade'. The nature and number of one's hosts grows with one's status, as does the nature and number of one's means of transport."

(This last point can be reinforced by looking at Beverley Hooper's article[3] in the March 1980 ENCOUNTER.) Though Malcolm Bradbury, David Pollard and I must have been, at best, "foreign friends", we seemed to rate rather higher as far as hosts and transport went, culminating in a farewell banquet given by the Vice-Minister of Culture, Zhou Erfu, in a splendid private dining room overlooking Beihai Lake in Peking.

But when that was over and the official visit was finished, I spent several days exploring Peking, using almost every possible form of transport with the exception of the underground (a limited service, now expanding) and horse-and-cart: on foot, bicycle, trolley, bus, three-wheeled motorised taxi (like their bone-shaking equivalents in India and Pakistan), normal taxi, and a couple of times the car lent to my uncle's family by the government. Whenever I was stationary, onlookers would gather—one of the slightly disconcerting things in a city which, it might be supposed, had got used to foreigners by now. Emerging with museum feet from the Peking Museum of Chinese History (a splendid collection, unfortunately curtailed at the beginning of the Sung Dynasty "for one month's repairs" while I was there), I rested on the steps of the Monument to the People's Heroes in the middle of Tiananmen Square, smoked a cigarette, and studied the tendentious version of early Chinese history presented in the museum's guidebook.

Three or four soldiers approached, at whom I genially smiled; then a collection of old and young, dragging infants by the hand, clutching babies; then more soldiers, until eventually a crowd of forty or so had gathered round me.

I know no Chinese word (except that for "beer"), and attempts in English got me nowhere. I showed my passport, my Chinese visa, attempted to demonstrate international amity with a limited range of gestures. Then, with the crowd still staring inscrutably but without evident hostility at me, I slunk off, feeling like an idiot.

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[2] *Revolution: There and Back*. By JAN BREDSDORFF. Translated by ALICE ROUGHTON. Faber, £8.95.

[3] Beverley Hooper, "Upstairs Downstairs in 'New China'". See also *Inside Peking: A Personal Report*. By BEVERLEY HOOPER. Macdonald & Jane's, £6.95.

MY LIFE

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TO FLY FROM PEKING to Tokyo was to enter another world. In China, in the cities and in the country alike (and in Sichuan we were deep in the country), what is most evident is manual labour: people making things by hand, using preternaturally heavy hoes and spades, pushing things, dragging things. Hardly a tractor or a piece of farm machinery or an excavator; the only cars official government ones and taxis. In this, China is much as Japan was when I knew it in the mid-1950s. At the time Japan was still recovering from the War, and adjusting after the Occupation. It was poor, and it looked it. Now, in 1980, to fly into the new international airport at Narita and to drive for seventy minutes along a vast motorway, flanked by unrecognisable towers and skyscrapers, racing under and over huge spaghetti junctions, was to anticipate the 21st century. Sometimes, in the back streets of Peking, I felt that I was exploring a Victorian city, with its dark little workshops at which men and women hammered bits of metal to make machine parts; just as in Chengdu there were streets that felt like Elizabethan London. The shock of Tokyo was such that I seriously wondered at first whether I was going to be able to cope with it. I was met at Narita by two of my ex-students, now Professors of English at Tokyo University and Tsuda College: one of them drove us into Tokyo in his enormous car, an object which no university teacher in the 1950s could possibly have afforded. For almost the whole journey I was exclaiming, almost aghast, at what had happened, like some Rip Van Winkle dragged protesting into the future.

Of course I adjusted. Having mastered the public transport system (always my test of coming to terms with a foreign city), I realised that Tokyo, for all its vastness and dazzle and sophisticated busyness, is as livable in as it was 25 years ago—indeed, with the improved standards, *more* livable in. Increased complexity seems to have created its own careful patterns of public behaviour—another kind of self-regulating device, perhaps. In the Tokyo underground, in the 1950s, crowds at rush hour fought and barged their way into the carriages; now they queue up at the places marked on the platforms and pass without jostling and without professional pushers heaving them in. At pedestrian crossings, everyone waits patiently until the lights change; no one strays about or jaywalks. (In China, most of all in Peking, roads are a chaotic swirl of interweaving bicycles, furiously clanging trolleys and buses, speedy official cars, and pedestrians wandering into the street with the bemused abstraction of sleepwalkers.)

Even the cherry-blossom-viewing crowds walking in the evening along the pavements opposite the Imperial Moat have a gaiety—fortified with *saké*—that is controlled and unbrutish. It was here that I got into conversation with three men who turned out to be employees of the *KDD*, the government postal and telegraph service which at the moment is under a cloud because of supposed ministerial corruption. Soon they were fervently proclaiming that they were my best friends, and before I knew what was happening we were all in a taxi (for which they insisted on paying, as they did for everything else), on the way to one of those tiny Tokyo bars where the four of us, plus Mama-san and Machiko-san, filled the place to capacity: a condition I soon found myself in too.

True, some of my friends from the 1950s were worried about the affluence and materialism of modern Japan, though they stopped short of any kind of identification with Mishima-like thinking about restoring the country's "spiritual greatness." But such talk seemed wistfully unreal, the musings of comfortably nostalgic men who had been children before the War, young teenagers during it, and who had often lost parents, houses and their whole past in the fire-bomb raids. There was much interest in China and my reactions to it, and feelings which seemed to be compounded of curiosity, fear, and wonder at a country which for so long was successively the fountainhead, the enemy, and now the enigmatic backward giant. It was hard, in the bracing knowingness and knowledgeability of academic Japan ("How would you rate the comparative merits of Geoffrey Hill and Craig Raine?") to cast my mind back to that young graduate student in Peking who was embarking on her George Eliot thesis without yet managing to have got hold of a copy of *Middlemarch*, or to remember without being patronising the novelist who groped towards "stream of consciousness" and then fell silent.

Japan is now the third biggest industrial nation in the world, with a very high standard of living and a considerable degree of self-confidence. China—as we were continually reminded by Chinese—is an undeveloped country with a thousand million people, with a remote Golden Age in the past (golden for a few, of course), and now the widespread awareness that Utopia may be not too far in the future. In both countries, a remembered phrase (was it Lincoln Steffens, on his return from the Soviet Union in the 1920s?) kept on coming into my head: "I have seen the future, and it works." But whose future?

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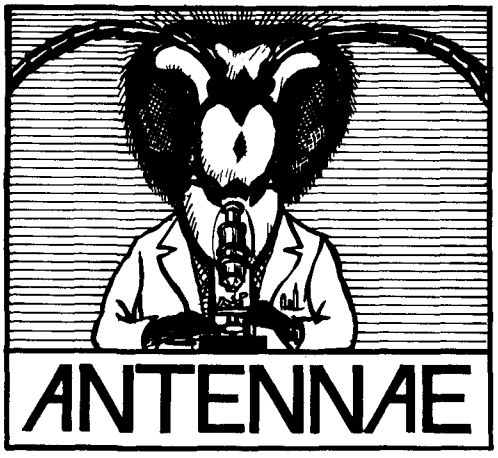

Freud & Analysis

The Illness of a Therapy

By Colin Brewer

THE TROUBLE with Freud and his disciples is that they were born too soon. I do not mean by that that his theories and therapeutic techniques were sound and effective and simply fell foul of the prejudices of his day and of ours. Perhaps I can best explain what I do mean by pointing to the numerous similarities between psychoanalysis (and its allied cults) and ECT.

The origins of Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT) are known to every psychiatrist, if not yet to every schoolboy. What happened was this. The Hungarian psychiatrist L. J. von Meduna believed that schizophrenia and epilepsy were to some extent incompatible. He therefore reasoned that if epileptic fits could be produced in schizophrenic patients, it might help their schizophrenia. Accordingly, he experimented with various drugs—initially camphor—which were known to produce epileptic fits or convulsions; and once it was demonstrated that the patients survived this procedure (as most people survive ordinary epileptic seizures) then naturally enough, as with any new treatment, doctors tried it on other sorts of psychiatric patients to see if it had any useful effect on them.

The production of epileptic fits by the use of drugs was an exceedingly unpleasant procedure. Not because of the fit itself which, like all such fits, involved loss of consciousness and complete amnesia for the event, but because during the build-up to the epileptic discharge most patients experienced a highly disagreeable premonitory sensation or "aura" which could last for half-an-hour or so.

In 1938, two or three years after von Meduna's discovery, Ugo Cerletti and Bini in Italy thought that it might be more efficient and more humane to induce these therapeutic fits by passing a small electric current through the brain causing instant loss of consciousness and enough retrograde amnesia to prevent any memory of the electric shock itself. Cerletti's first guinea pig, conveniently perhaps, was a stray schizophrenic of no fixed abode and with no known relations. The first shock was insufficient to produce a convulsion, but it was sufficient to make the patient—who had previously been mute—sit up and say, with some feeling: "Not another! It'll kill me. . . ." As it happened, he was wrong, for Cerletti—uncrossing his fingers for long enough to push the button again—applied a slightly longer current, and the man duly convulsed and lived to make Cerletti's name synonymous with the white heat of medical technology, or the barbarity of psychiatrists, depending on your point of view.

CONVULSION TREATMENT—first with drugs and later with electricity—soon became very popular and was used for practically every kind of psychiatric disorder. Although a number of psychiatrists felt that the response of schizophrenics to the new treatment was rather disappointing, it was—and still is—widely used in that condition; but it was in the treatment of depression that ECT (which soon replaced drug-induced convulsion)

THIS *is one of a series of columns planned by* ARTHUR KOESTLER, *for which he acts as editorial adviser; his article "Horizons in Space" inaugurated the series in the October 1979 issue. It seems that "the new frontier" lies not between the sciences and the humanities, but on the peripheries of contemporary science itself. This department is mainly concerned with those border areas, from cosmology to psychology, which are of special relevance to both cultures.*

DR COLIN BREWER *is a psychiatrist and medical journalist. After qualifying at St Bartholomew's Hospital, he worked in general practice and as a ship's surgeon before specialising in psychiatry—mainly because he found that many of his patients seemed more troubled by their mind than by their bodies. He practised in Australia and the West Indies before returning to Britain. His special interests are alcoholism, abortion, psychotherapy and forensic psychiatry—particularly the relationship between brain disease and crime. He writes regularly for several medical journals, and his first book—"Can Social Work Survive?"—written jointly with June Lait, will be published this summer by Maurice Temple Smith.*

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became really popular, at least among psychiatrists. Indeed, it became virtually the standard treatment, certainly for those patients sufficiently incapacitated to need admission to hospital. No doubt its popularity was mainly due to a genuine belief in its effectiveness; but one must bear in mind that in those days there was really nothing else in the way of active treatment, and while many depressives recovered spontaneously after months or years, quite a few died from tuberculosis and other infections contracted in a weakened state, while others committed suicide; so that the pressure to "do something" was quite strong, though God knows doctors need little enough encouragement in this respect.

Like psychoanalysis, ECT was also born too soon. That is to say, both forms of treatment were introduced at a time when changes in medical practice (one hesitates to call them progress) were brought about largely by people writing to medical journals and saying, in effect: "Gentlemen, I've just devised this interesting new treatment and it seems to work a treat. Why don't you try it on your patients?" Now of course, useful contributions to medical knowledge have certainly been made in this haphazard and rather subjective way, and I would be the last person to discourage imagination in medicine. Unfortunately, imagination has probably done as much to impede the advance of medicine as to encourage it. The same thought-processes which in some circumstances may enable a man to perceive an idea which nobody else has noticed may, in other circumstances, lead him to perceive "facts" which nobody else has noticed for the simple reason that they do not exist.

Like von Meduna and Cerletti, Sigmund Freud was in the business of healing or treatment; which is to say, making people better. All healers are prone to what might be called the basic therapeutic delusion, which is that whatever one does in the name of therapy must be actually therapeutic and generally useful. This delusion has led numerous well-intentioned people—and will, I fear, lead many more—to claim sincerely, but quite wrongly, that they have discovered an effective and specific treatment for a particular condition. The knowledge that the wish is father to the thought is a good deal older than Freud; it means that doctors and other healers are distressingly prone to a number of well recognised perceptual distortions. These include a tendency to see improvement where none has actually occurred; a tendency to selectively ignore deterioration or side effects; and perhaps most frequent and most reprehensible of all—*post hoc ergo propter hoc*—mistaking a spontaneous improvement in the condition, which would have occurred anyway, for a response to treatment. For it is fortunately true that a large proportion of disorders, whether mental or physical, improve or disappear of their own accord.

NEITHER THE FOUNDER of psychoanalysis nor the founder of ECT seems to have escaped this basic therapeutic delusion. Indeed, Freud probably suffered from it to a greater degree than Cerletti becuase while the Italian seems to have started off from a position of mere curiosity about the outcome, and subsequently convinced himself that the treatment was a good idea, Freud appears to have started from certain *a priori* assumptions and to have devised a treatment to fit them in which one would naturally expect him to have a rather larger emotional investment.

The increasing awareness that a good deal of harm was being done in the name of therapy by people who believed with passionate sincerity, but entirely incorrectly, that their brain-child was a valuable contribution to healing (and that the greater the passion, the greater the harm) led to the development of certain techniques designed to encourage truth and objectivity in medical research. Chief among these, then as now, is the controlled clinical trial. This is a very simple scientific concept which takes account of the fact that patients often get better (or worse) for reasons entirely unrelated to the nature of the treatment which they are supposed to be receiving. It makes it possible, or at any rate a good deal easier, to say whether a given treatment really does have a specific effect; and if so, whether it is for good or ill. Most regrettably, neither psychoanalysis nor ECT was submitted to such controlled trials of their effectiveness when they were introduced.

In the case of psychoanalysis, this omission was particularly reprehensible. I say this for two reasons. In the first place, there was nothing really new about the concept of the controlled trial. As early as the 16th century, Ambroise Paré, physician to the French court, demonstrated the ineffectiveness of bezoar, then a popular antidote to poisoning, by giving it to one of two condemned criminals and giving poison to both of them. Both died. In the 18th century, the naval surgeon James Lind conducted a slightly more sophisticated trial which demonstrated the effectiveness of citrus fruits in scurvy. And early in the 19th century, the great Philippe Pinel—one of the few examples of the psychiatrist as hero—showed in his writings that he was well aware of the need for the kind of constructive scepticism and the careful comparison of treated and untreated groups which are the real foundations of therapeutic science.

The second reason is that supporters of Freud generally champion him in terms of a great scientist (however else they may describe him) and claim that psychoanalysis has made a real and valuable contribution to the relief of mental disorder and suffering. In other words, Freud has been touted largely, though not entirely, as a doctor, a healer,

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and a therapist. Is it conceivable that he would have made such an impact on our thinking and our language if he had marched into our vocabulary not wearing the garb and the respectability of medicine, but as just another philosopher and thinker, or cosmologist? Yet it is clear wherever one looks in Freud's work that much of his thinking was highly unscientific and that he was well behind even Ambroise Paré in his approach to the vital question of therapeutic effectiveness. In this respect, Freud was no worse than many other of his contemporaries, and the point would hardly be worth making were it not for the fact that Freud himself frequently implied—sometimes kindly, sometimes irascibly—that other healers were a pretty pathetic lot and that he had wonderful insights and techniques which were ignored or rejected by the unenlightened.

THE CONTROLLED CLINICAL TRIAL has been described as the rock on which many a fine therapeutic or aetiological theory has been wrecked. Yet it is only within quite recent times that it has become the rule rather than the exception to submit new treatments to scientific assessment. When I first did general practice some 15 years ago, I was—like all GPs—often visited by representatives of the drug companies, and I clearly remember the uncomprehending looks I got from some of them when I asked if their new nostrum had shown itself superior to a placebo in a controlled trial. Sometimes I even had to explain what a controlled trial was. Today, most drug companies recognise that such trials are almost mandatory; and even though some of the trials are not very well conducted, they are at least accepted as necessary. Some old and well-established treatments have also been subjected, rather late in the day, to controlled trials. In the field of medicine, it has been shown that long periods of bed rest and the use of anti-clotting drugs, which used to be routine after heart attacks, do not improve the prognosis. Accordingly these treatments have been largely abandoned. Even ECT is now being properly assessed and while the evidence is still somewhat conflicting, it seems clear that although ECT is, in many cases, a very effective treatment (that is to say, many patients seem to recover more quickly if they receive ECT than if they receive drugs, or placebo tablets) it does not necessarily matter very much whether the psychiatrist actually presses the button and causes a fit, or whether the patient merely receives an anaesthetic without having any fit. In other words, ECT may be simply a very elaborate placebo, and it should hardly occasion surprise if elaborate placebos have a more powerful effect than less elaborate ones. The effectiveness of ECT may therefore have little to do with the theory which lies behind it. Indeed von Meduna's original hypothesis is almost certainly wrong in many respects, for patients with epilepsy—like any other patients with cerebral abnormalities—are actually *more* prone to schizophrenia rather than less.

HOWEVER ONE DESCRIBES psychoanalysis, it is certainly elaborate and therefore it is to be expected that it will have a powerful placebo effect. By varying the design of controlled trials, it is possible to show not merely whether a treatment is more effective than a placebo; if it is more effective, it is possible to find out which components of the treatment are responsible for its superiority. The same process which has cast doubt on the necessity for the electrical component of ECT has recently been applied to psychoanalytic psychotherapy with some interesting results.

A few years ago, a group of workers in the USA headed by R. B. Sloane decided to compare the effects of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, behavioural psychotherapy, and a "placebo" procedure.[1] Psychiatric outpatients thought suitable for psychotherapy were randomly assigned to one of three groups. All patients had the same detailed three-hour initial interview in which the background and the main problems were discussed. One group was then merely put on the waiting list and telephoned at monthly intervals to make it clear that they had not been forgotten. A second group received psychoanalytic psychotherapy and a third group received behaviourally oriented psychotherapy. All patients were reassessed after a few months. While the results indicated a modest superiority of behavioural psychotherapy over psychoanalytic approaches, the most interesting finding was the lack of difference in many respects between the psychoanalytic group and those who merely received the initial assessment interview. In other words, the study indicated that while of course many patients feel better for talking with a psychotherapist, the precise technique which the psychotherapist uses may be less important than the fact that he and the patient are in communication.

Similar methods have been applied to various types of behavioural psychotherapy; and in consequence, although the behaviourist movement has a relatively short history, several therapeutic fallacies have already been exposed and several techniques based on them have been largely or entirely abandoned. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the psychoanalytic movement and its offspring. There have certainly been additions to the range of techniques employed by analytical therapists but

[1] R. B. Sloane et al., *Psychotherapy versus Behaviour Therapy* (Harvard University Press, 1975).

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very little has been abandoned, because in order to abandon a particular therapy, it is necessary first to admit to oneself that the therapy concerned may not actually have any specific effect. This admission the psychoanalytic movement has been singularly reluctant to make. The healthy therapeutic scepticism which now informs most therapeutic research is no more popular among the analysts than are doubts about the existence of God among the members of the Vatican Curia. It is tempting, and may even be quite true, to conclude that this reflects an essential similarity of outlook between the two faithful institutions.

IT IS AGAINST this background that the steady and almost certainly inexorable decline of psychoanalysis must be viewed. That the decline exists is beyond doubt. In the United States, which has always been a stronghold of psychoanalysis (indeed, like capitalism, psychoanalysis would probably not have survived without US support), both the number of psychiatrists entering psychoanalytic training and the number of patients treated by members of the various analytic schools are decreasing.[2]

There are two reasons for this decline. The first is that although psychoanalysis is an unscientific and largely untested treatment, lack of scientific rigour or of therapeutic objectivity is by no means confined to analysts and their patients. Many other equally unscientific but competing brands of "psychotherapy" have sprung up in recent years and present the same sort of challenge to the blessed tetrarchy of Freud, Jung, Adler, and Klein that the various non-conformist religious sects posed to the established churches of Britain in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The other reason is that ordinary doctors, who often refer patients to psychotherapists, are increasingly showing a preference for therapists who use treatments which have some scientific validation rather than those who do not. This is particularly important in Britain where self-referral to specialists is not as common as it is in the USA.

There would be little antagonism between psychoanalysis and mainstream psychiatry if the analysts were prepared to see themselves merely as gurus, philosophers, or priests. Some, no doubt, actually do see themselves as occupying such a role and no other. Few doctors, I suspect, would have any real objection to sharing their patients with various sorts of analyst on these terms, just as many of us already share our patients with priests even if we do not happen to be particularly religious ourselves. We can do this because priests have a long tradition of "rendering unto Caesar", whereas the analysts have a rather shorter but much more vigorous tradition of declaring in the most forthright language that Caesar has got it all wrong. Many patients come to psychiatrists, as they come to analysts, because of one or two particular problems which cause them a great deal of distress. Sometimes these problems are relatively isolated, and in other respects the patient functions quite well. A typical and far from uncommon example would be the patient with a phobia of spiders which only interferes with his life in circumstances where the chance of encountering a spider is high (such as going into a cellar or an attic). More frequently perhaps, one finds that the one or two particularly distressing problems exist on a background of more generalised lack of competence or confidence in many other areas of life. To "cure" such patients requires nothing less than a complete existential or philosophical rebore, which is what analysts often give the impression of claiming to provide.

Yet it does not mean that such patients will settle for nothing less than that. Many people function quite satisfactorily—satisfactorily to them, that is—in spite of personalities which they themselves would often recognise as providing some room for improvement; but they have learnt to live with themselves, and in so far as they plan their lives at all have planned them on the basis that they will probably remain more or less the way they always have been. They seek help, in many cases, not because they have suddenly become dissatisfied with the *status quo* but because circumstances have so changed that habits of thought and behaviour which once enabled them to get by at a satisfactory level, if not at a perfect one, no longer do so. In other cases, circumstances do not change very much but inappropriate habits of thinking and behaviour develop gradually, or suddenly, so that they can no longer deal as effectively or as satisfactorily with the demands of existence.

Very often, all that patients want in these situations is a restoration of the previous satisfactory if imperfect *status quo*. They do not, as a rule, need to be told that the search for perfect happiness and contentment is likely to be a fruitless one and ask only for a reduction in the level of unhappiness and discontent. They do not necessarily want an existential rebore, and some of them are even perceptive enough to wonder whether, if they could

[2] A 1976 survey by the American Psychoanalytic Association showed a fall in the average number of patients per analyst from 6.2 in 1966 to 4.7 in 1976. And whereas a generation ago over 120 students competed for nine places at one psychoanalytic institute, it is now lucky to get more than one applicant perplace (*Time* 2 April 1979).

Robin Murray ("A Reappraisal of American Psychiatry", *The Lancet*, 1979, Vol. I, p. 255) notes that a survey in 1975 showed that only 45% of psychiatric residents in the United States now rated psychoanalysis as an important tool, compared with almost universal acclaim in 1950.

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have one, their wife, friends, and colleagues, who may well have adapted satisfactorily to the old model with all its imperfections, might have some difficulty in coping with this new man—this *Übermensch*—who will rise from the ashes of the old personality.

Yet an existential rebore is exactly what the analysts insist that this patient, like all such patients, must have. The patient may think that he has one or two relatively simple problems—a fear of spiders here, a certain ineptitude in his social relationships there—but the analyst knows better. The analyst knows that these are but the tip of a psychic iceberg, symptoms of serious and deeply rooted conflicts which require the psychotherapeutic equivalent of radical surgery and deep X-ray treatment rather than local excision. "Merely" relieving the symptoms—and that is often how psychoanalysts actually talk of these matters—is to invite disaster because, without the existential rebore which must in their view precede it, "symptom substitution" will make any sort of psychotherapeutic endeavour as fruitless a task as digging holes in a quicksand.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS EXAMPLES of this sort of thinking in the psychoanalytic literature. One with which I happen to be particularly familiar concerns the treatement of obesity, a notoriously intractable problem. To many people, obesity simply represents an imbalance between the amount of food taken in and the amount of food required by the body for its metabolic purposes. Sometimes the amount of food consumed is no more than average, or is less than average, yet the body is unkind enough to require even less than that. In other cases, perhaps the majority, the metabolism is normal enough but the patient eats more than a normal amount because he likes food, because she is constantly exposed to temptation by working in the house all day, or because stuffing herself with food takes her mind off some of the more unpleasant aspects of her existence. Personally I have never come across a patient, or anyone else for that matter, who actually wanted to weigh twice as much as most people, yet to some analysts obesity of this degree is no mere accident of fate but may represent a "defence" against feelings of frailty or insignificance. It may also represent compelling "oral needs" which can of course be traced back unerringly to certain lacunae in infantile psychosexual development. Needless to say, these lacunae can only be filled in by psychoanalysis or something very like it. Merely treating the obesity will not do. Indeed, according to at least one psychoanalytic sage, psychotherapy is more important than "mere" weight reduction, which may uncover "latent" psychoses.

No doubt psychotherapy *is* more important—to the psychotherapist; but the patient may not, indeed usually does not, see it that way. There is now available an operation which short-circuits most of the small intestine where food absorption occurs, and which leads in nearly all cases to rapid and lasting weight loss in even the most intractable cases of massive obesity. Naturally it is not without its surgical hazards (though massive obesity itself is not exactly good for one's life expectancy); but it needed the peculiarly convoluted thinking of the psychoanalysts to predict that "simply" losing weight, without paying any attention to the "underlying psychological problems" which in their view have given rise to the obesity in the first place, would be attended by all sorts of appalling psychological consequences. In practice, it is now clear that such patients have very few psychological problems apart from what might be termed "problems of success" which might affect any patient suddenly relieved of a serious and long-standing physical handicap.[3]

THE DECLINE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS and related treatments is not due to some transient or more lasting ideological change directed specifically at

[3] C. Brewer, H. White, and M. Baddeley, "Beneficial Effects of Jejunoileostomy on Compulsive Eating and Associated Psychiatric Symptoms", *British Medical Journal* (1974), Vol. IV, p. 314.

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Freud and his legacy. Nor does it represent the sort of changes in the *Zeitgeist* which made relatively right-wing views genuinely popular in the 1920s (and perhaps again in the 1980s) and relatively left-wing views genuinely popular in the 1960s. The cause is quite simply that the business of healing, whether of the body or of the mind, is becoming ever more scientific, by which I mean quite simply that it demands, increasingly, proof rather than mere assertion. Before it will accept either a theory about the cause of certain conditions, or a statement about the effectiveness of certain treatments, it demands almost as a routine that the theory should be tested against alternative explanations and that claims for effectiveness must be shown to have taken into account the numerous sources of error which exist in this field.

The controlled clinical study is now routine. The increasing scepticism of doctors—a scepticism, it must be said, based very largely on an increasing awareness that many claims of therapeutic effectiveness had no foundation whatsoever—has led to a re-examination of established practices and to the consequent discovery that many of them had no beneficial effect on the disorders for which they were recommended. There now exists, therefore, a widespread, unprecedented, and—in my view—very welcome and long overdue scepticism about the effectiveness of *any* kind of treatment.

THE PRACTICE OF HEALING has seen many spurious claims and false dawns in the past; but until recently the basic therapeutic delusion has generally blinded practitioners to such unpalatable facts of therapeutic life. From a general tendency to use, or at least tolerate, any treatment which had not been conclusively shown to be *in*effective, the general tendency now is increasingly to reject or at least to be highly suspicious of any treatment which has not been shown to be specifically effective. Paradoxically, at a time when medicine has made enormous technical advances and has virtually consigned a number of serious diseases to the history books, doctors have become a good deal more humble about their real therapeutic effectiveness.

Increasingly, the world of therapy is dividing into two camps.

On the one hand are those who carry out controlled trials of any new treatment at an early stage, introduce it with a certain modesty, and are not unduly surprised if further experience and testing should show that the early promise was not fulfilled. If this happens, they will naturally be disappointed; but they will go back to the drawing board with reasonably good grace. Such people are pragmatists and far more concerned with cure than they are with explanation. If a treatment works, they are happy to accept it even if they do not know how it works. They prefer cure without explanation to explanation without cure.

On the other hand, there are those who start out from the proposition that their treatment works because their general theory tells them that it works. They believe that they can explain the origin of certain conditions, and that is enough for them. They do not like to put their theories to the test of effectiveness because to do so involves the possibility of questioning the underlying theory. Such people often value *explanation* more highly than cure. They are generally hostile to controlled trials and seem unable to understand that the time to do such trials is when a new treatment is introduced, rather than years, decades, or—as in the case of homoeopathy—centuries later when vested interests, emotional as well as financial, naturally make it more difficult for those involved to accept such unpleasant truths as may emerge.

Therapeutic modesty has not exactly been the hallmark of this second group; and it is certainly not the most obvious feature of psychoanalysis. But pride goeth before a fall. The Freudian movement, having once seemed ready to take on the rest of the world in the expectation of winning (did not one of our sociological peeresses predict that Freud's name would live as long as Christ's?) is now facing its retreat from Moscow, without even the prospect of a Waterloo to mark its final disappearance. Its claims to scientific respectability have been its undoing, for those who live by science must risk dying by science too. As a therapeutic procedure, psychoanalysis and its offspring have shown themselves to be rather like very radical surgery for breast cancer—stimulating, challenging, and rewarding for those who do it, demanding for the patient, excellent for giving a feeling that something is being done, but ultimately giving worse results than simpler procedures.

If even surgeons have had to yield to scientific evaluation, what hope have the descendants of Freud of recapturing the hearts and minds of the medical profession, without whose imprimatur their future status—like their effectiveness—looks set to lie somewhere between Herbalism and Christian Science.

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IN THE MARGIN

The Austrian "Miracle"

By Melvin J. Lasky

Vienna

AS AN AMERICAN who has been living in Europe since the so-called "V-E" day of May 1945, I know of few events in those three-and-a-half decades that have given me so deep a feeling of inner satisfaction—of political fulfilment, even of personal pleasure—as the restoration of Austria in national sovereignty under the conditions of civil freedom which we know and celebrate as the *Staatsvertrag*. I know it is a ceremonial occasion, and we must beware of mere sentimentalities and emotional exaggerations. In the historical perspective of the last thirty-five years there has been no lack of important and dramatic events. I was with the US troops that captured Dachau in the last April of the Third *Reich*, and nothing can rank with the significance of the destruction of Hitler's Concentration-Camp State. One felt relief, mixed with the deepest sadness and horror. I was in Paris, Rome and Berlin in the late 1940s, and watched with approval the efforts of the West's democratic forces to rally themselves in the resistance to the Soviet and Communist efforts to move forward in their totalitarian control of the rest of Europe beyond the East-West dividing line. Again, one felt relief, for the "lamps of liberty" were in danger of going out.

THESE LINES *were written for a ceremonial occasion: the 25th anniversary of the "Staatsvertrag", signed in Moscow by Chancellor Figl and recently commemorated in Vienna by Chancellor Kreisky. This brief contribution was published, in German, in a special issue of the distinguished Austrian review, the "Europäische Rundschau"—but with one small omission (no prizes for shrewd guesses as to which ticklish passage was involved).*

I REMEMBER all too vividly my visits to Four-Power Vienna in those gloomy years after the "Liberation." The occupation was perhaps not so severe as in defeated Germany—after all, Buchenwald in the Soviet zone was crowded, a year or two after Hitler's death, with new victims of a political police!—but prospects for establishing a tolerable life for Austrians were depressing. In the light of this I was surprised (even a little shocked) to note, in a recent interview with Chancellor Kreisky (*Stern*, 6 March 1980), a curious outburst of nostalgia. Convinced of the soundness ("*Das wäre zu schön, um wahr zu sein*"—*too beautiful to be true*) of some proposal for an Atom Free Zone in Central Europe and of how easy it would be to control such an arrangement, he went on oddly to say:

> "We once had *ein System*, an arrangement, in post-War Vienna: four-in-a-jeep, Allied military police, patrolling the whole city . . . and that worked splendidly, there was peace and quiet. . . ."

What misplaced sentimentality! One would have thought we were all to a man totally committed to the free present against the unfree past. For after all, what also belonged to "the System", also present in Vienna, and in the Eastern Zone of Austria, was the Red Army!

This was always the crux of the matter, and the historic meaning of "the Cold War", whether one liked it or not. The Soviet military forces had not returned to the *status quo ante bellum*, but had absorbed or otherwise controlled non-Russian territories in Eastern Europe and had established themselves on the Elbe and the Danube. So long as they remained—and those "*Four-in-a-jeep*" were a symbol of a dismal impasse—there could be no hope for Austria. It would continue to be a "geographical expression", without prospects for a prospering economy, independent sovereign self-government, or a free culture. Would the Russians ever leave? What could ever persuade them to pull back once they had the Bolshevik good fortune to make a giant step forward?

FOR MY OWN PART this remains one of the most tantalising problems of contemporary European history. As a journalist I used to pester the leading Western diplomats and Kremlinologists—from Kennan and Bohlen to Borkenau and Löwenthal—for an adequate explanation. I never got one. As Charles Bohlen writes in his memoirs (*Witness to History*, p. 374), "To this day, no outsider knows for certain why the Soviet Union shifted its position

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on Austria. . . ." Bohlen once told me that the only time he had ever seen cold Molotov smile warmly was the day he called him, as US Ambassador, into the Kremlin to inform him of the news—the Bolshevik decision "to abandon the right to reintroduce troops into Austria once a peace treaty was signed. . . ."

Even the "insiders" do not tell us for certain why it all happened the way it did. Still, that is no reason to give credence to the fantasies of the outsiders who should be ignored. In one, *History of the Cold War* (John Lukacs, 1962, p. 116), an American professor writes of the *Staatsvertrag:* "The disengagement of America and Russia in Europe had begun. . . ." Nonsense; no such thing began at all. And in another (*Histoire de la Guerre Froide,* André Fontaine, 1965, vol. II, ch. 6), *Le Monde's* expert absurdly suggests the transferability of the "Austrian solution" to the German problem: "It is difficult not to believe that a unique opportunity for getting out of the Cold War once and for all may have been lost at that time. . . " (English edition, p.126). There was no such opportunity, and French foreign policy analysts seemed to be afflicted with chronic difficulties in what they can and cannot believe.

Khrushchev, perhaps the most central actor in the drama, was certainly an "insider"; and if we can credit his memoirs, privately tape-recorded during his last years of enforced retirement, there was only one "unique opportunity" and that was Austria's. No doubt about it, there was a drastic change of line in Moscow in the 1950s. By withdrawing the troops from Porkkala (only 12 miles from Helsinki), "Finlandisation" was confirmed; by recognising heretical Yugoslavia, "Titoisation" was confirmed; and by consenting to an independent and neutral *Österreich*, "Austrianisation" was confirmed. For the rest the Cold War continued to move unabated from one battle-ground to another: West Berlin, Budapest, Cuba, Prague, etc, etc. As Khrushchev writes in his "last testament":

> ". . .The Austrians gave me credit for having played a leading role in the decision to pull out of Austria, and they were quite right. They didn't have any idea what sort of internal struggle had taken place before we signed the peace treaty, and I don't deny it was on my initiative that the correct decision was finally made." (*Khrushchev Remembers*, Penguin ed. 1977, II, p. 558–9).

Marshal Zhukov went along with this very cautious and very modest exercise in flexibility, but Molotov (as we are told) was "obstinate" and was soon retired.

DOES IT MAKE any difference that all the calculations of the day—except for the lucky Austrian beneficiaries—were quite wrong? Great-power diplomacy lumbers along like a clumsy prehistoric monster, unsure of step and faulty in vision. The Kremlin obviously paid some attention to some very primitive military calculation about how a neutral Austria would disrupt some vital NATO supply-line between Bavaria and Venetia. A matter of no moment, then or now. It obviously paid no attention to one vital factor which might have induced a fearful inflexibility—namely, the inspiration of a free and prospering Austria, enjoying its total independence, for the future national dissidence in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. I very much doubt whether Vienna would have been given up if "Budapest" and "Prague" could have been seen ahead.

Nor were the Americans any more sensitive to the full import of that great event in the summer of 1955. There is in Princeton University a collection of interviews in the so-called "Dulles Oral History Project", and, if you wish, you can listen to the voice of ex-President Dwight Eisenhower reminiscing:

> "Well, suddenly the thing was signed one day and [Dulles] came in and he grinned rather ruefully and he said, 'Well, I think we've had it.'. . ."

Why "*rueful*" which means doleful and dejected? And why had the Americans "*had it*" which implies being outwitted and worsted? The trouble with fighting a Cold War is that it tends to freeze you into fixed positions. The trouble with *Détente* is that it causes a relaxation which prevents you from facing sturdily the next round of problems and dangers. As François Bondy has wittily formulated it (in these pages, in his Notebook after Afghanistan), *Détente* is only the continuation of the Cold War by other means, and sometimes by the same.

And so, finally, the remembrance of things past leads in this historic instance, as indeed in Proust, to a heightened sense of paradox, of what the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr called "*the irony of history*" and Hegel before him "*die List der Geschichte*." Men are ambiguous and events have their ambivalence. Our tragedy is that we often turn out to be quite incapable of entertaining two different aspects of an idea at the same time.

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LETTERS

Noam Chomsky Replies

LEOPOLD LABEDZ'S ARTICLE (February) may have a certain interest for students of contemporary propaganda. Consider a few typical examples of what passes for argument.

Labedz claims that I argued "that the refugees from Cambodia were not to be given credence", basing himself on a review-article (with E. S. Herman, *Nation*, 25 June 1977) in which we wrote that "their reports must be considered seriously." How does he turn our conclusion into its opposite? Simple. By suppressing our conclusion and noting only our qualification that "care and caution are necessary" for reasons we mentioned, which, as we added, are commonplace. Putting aside his distortion, consider the conclusion Labedz draws from our qualification: that we are comparable to Nazi and Stalinist apologists. If so, then the same strictures apply to Ponchaud, whom Labedz much admires, and who wrote in the book we reviewed that each refugee "recounts what he saw or heard, his imagination and homesickness tending to exaggerate and distort the facts." And to Charles Twining, whom the State Department regarded (accurately) as "really the best expert [on Cambodian refugees] . . . that exists in the world today", and who testified before Congress in 1977 that "you must talk to a refugee as soon as he comes out or the story may become exaggerated." In fact, everyone who is concerned with truth rather than with propaganda for his favoured cause draws the same conclusions.

LABEDZ CLAIMS that in a letter to ENCOUNTER (October 1979), I "obfuscate" my position by pretending that in the cited article my concern was about the "*exact number* of the victims of genocide" (his emphasis). My letter dealt with the allegation that the Khmer Rouge had "boasted" of having "eliminated" 2 million people, presented with no evidence and then modified after private inquiry to the charge that thousands or hundreds of thousands had been killed. To Labedz, concern over a factor of 1,000 is "concern about the *exact number*." As for our article, we cited estimates ranging from thousands to hundreds of thousands and even millions killed, concluding that "We do not pretend to know where the truth lies amidst these sharply conflicting assessments." Our explicit point was that the harsher the accusations, the more publicity they received, quite independently of evidence. We also described a pattern of fabrication and deceit which persists, as demonstrated in my letter to ENCOUNTER and others that Labedz cites, grossly misrepresenting their contents. There has been no "obfuscation", apart from Labedz's attempts to distort the plain facts.

LABEDZ LAUNCHES similar accusations against Richard Gott, who offered a figure of 100,000 to 300,000 who "could have been killed." If this proves that Gott is comparable to Nazi and Stalinist propagandists, then the same is true of Ponchaud, who estimated the numbers killed at 100,000 or more; of Twining, who testified that the numbers killed were in the "thousands or hundreds of thousands"; of Timothy Carney, the second of the State Department's leading experts, who estimated the number of deaths from "brutal, rapid change" (not "mass genocide") as in the hundreds of thousands (June 1978); and in fact, of virtually everyone who has been concerned to determine the facts. For details, see Chomsky and Herman, *Political Economy of Human Rights* (vol. II).

It is, incidentally, striking that while Labedz's accusations against alleged apologists collapse upon investigation, he does provide a remarkable example of the genre, namely, his defence of the murderous US bombing of heavily populated areas as "front-line military action", a comment that really does rank with Stalinist apologetics.

FOR LABEDZ, it is an incontrovertible fact that "millions" were "liquidated" and the population reduced "from seven to four million" under the Khmer Rouge régime. Others are less certain. The US State Department estimated the summer 1979 population of Cambodia at about 6 million (Status Report, 13 November 1979). In late 1979 the CIA is reported to have produced a similar estimate, and a recent province-by-province survey regarded as accurate by foreign relief experts estimates the current population at "more than six million" (*Washington Post*, 7 February 1980). The current population plus the sum of those who fled to Thailand or died from starvation in 1979 gives an estimate of the population at the end of the Khmer Rouge régime. By Labedz's standards, the class of neo-Stalinist apologists widens. Actually, all such estimates should be regarded with caution; they may understate or exaggerate the scale of the massacres.

Labedz claim that I criticised Western intellectuals for giving "too much 'publicity' to the Cambodian genocide", another fabrication. What I criticised was not the "publicity" but the propagandistic excesses and falsifications, urging that critics keep to the facts, which, as I noted, were grisly enough.

IT IS CLEAR from many such examples that what really enrages Labedz is the commitment to find the truth. But even here, his concerns are selective. Thus, in the same article that arouses his ire, we criticised Ponchaud for exaggerating the deaths caused by US bombing of Cambodia. Labedz does not conclude that we are apologists for US atrocities. Our quaint view is that facts matter, whether the issue is Khmer Rouge or US atrocities. One facet of this commitment outrages Labedz; another, his counterparts in other propaganda systems.

I DO NOT MEAN to suggest that all of Labedz's shots miss the target. He is quite right to criticise the Soviet press for producing "not a squeak" on Cambodian atrocities until 1978.

Applying the same reasonable standard elsewhere, recall that since December 1975, roughly the same period, the Indonesian army has been on the rampage in East Timor, with current estimates of victims in the range of 100,000–200,000, roughly 1/5 of the population, thus "genocide" by Labedz's standards. The direct responsibility lies in Washington, which has provided the required military and diplomatic support and laboured to conceal the facts; the "Human Rights" administration sharply increased the arms flow, enabling Indonesia to conduct the murderous offensives of 1977–8 that created conditions that relief workers and others compare to

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Cambodia. To a lesser extent, responsibility falls on other industrial democracies. We now ask how many "squeaks" there have been in ENCOUNTER, recalling that the basic facts have been available to those who chose to know for four years. Note that the comparison is unfair to the Soviet press; the state it serves was not directly responsible for the Cambodian massacres, whereas honest reporting in the West could have brought the Timor massacres to a halt. The conclusions seem obvious, with no further comment.

NOAM CHOMSKY

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Dept of Linguistics & Philosophy
Cambridge, Mass.

Ed. Note: A reply by Leopold Labedz to this letter, plus some more general remarks on the views of Noam Chomsky, will be found in his column, "Under Western Eyes: Chomsky Revisited", on p. 28.

Australian "Misunderstandings"

DR FRANK KNOPFELMACHER (March), while referring to my "impeccable past as a social democrat and civil libertarian", states that I have "adopted neo-Nazi doctrines." All that I have done is to examine the evidence for the allegation that the Nazis had a policy to exterminate Jews especially by gassing in "gas chambers", and conclude that much of the "evidence" is fabricated and contradictory, and that the allegation is false.

My conclusion has nothing to do with accepting neo-Nazi doctrines but results from a close examination of the available evidence over a period of several years.

My conclusions are shared by Professor H. Diwald in Germany, Professor R. Faurisson in France, and Professors A. Butz and J. Martin in the USA. The high death-rate in the German camps, which was comparable to the death-rate in the Boer war camps, was due to malnutrition resulting from the chaos and shortage of food caused by saturation bombing, and due to typhus which spread because of a failure to use the disinfectant *Zyklon-B* on a more regular basis. The bodies of the people who died in the camps were cremated.

The continuous repetition of the "6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis" legend is designed to bolster the diplomatic position of Israel whose hard-line policies could lead to a world war, and have already contributed to a sevenfold increase in oil prices. Zionist Jews frankly refer to the Holocaust as "Israel's number one propaganda weapon."

The Butz thesis has been fully debated in the Australian media including three nation-wide television programmes. The Holocaust legend will not stand up to close scrutiny. That is why UK magazines such as the *New Statesman* devote four pages to attacking the revisionist historians referred to above, and refuse to publish any letters in reply. The continued repetition of the legend is a group libel of Germans.

As is evident from the ridiculous stories alleging bizarre atrocities by the Russians in Afghanistan, truth is the first casualty in war.

JOHN BENNETT

Melbourne
Australia

MR BENNETT'S LETTER makes it unnecessary for me to refute the claim (or thesis) that Bennett is engaged in historical scholarship, however widely defined, or that he is conducting a learned discussion about the precise number of Jewish victims during the Holocaust. Bennett's message is quite clear: the Holocaust is a cynical fabrication concocted to steal other people's land. The result is bringing our industries to a standstill, and the world to the brink of war, by way of an oil crisis. If our economic system breaks down, or if a war breaks out, it will be largely the work of "the Zionist Jews." In resuscitating the age-old hate theme—"The Jew is to blame for the evils that beset us"—Mr Bennett is not alone, except for the brutality of his approach which contracts with the cynical subtlety of some influential publications in Britain and elsewhere, whose systematic campaign of defamation against Israel is almost as implacable.

It is interesting to get "from the horse's mouth" a description of how generous the dissemination of the Butz-Bennett "thesis" was in the respectable Australian mass media. I tried to explain the reasons for their odd behaviour, as charitably as I could, in my letter to ENCOUNTER (March 1980). It is also instructive to read Bennett's last paragraph, in which he fortifies (not for the first time) his denial of Nazi massacres by a denial of Communist massacres.

FRANK KNOPFELMACHER

University of Melbourne

"Confessions of a Biographer"

I UNDERSTAND that a section of my recent article, "Confessions of a Biographer" (ENCOUNTER, February) has caused unintended offence to Dr Hoskin, the former Librarian of Churchill College, Cambridge, and to his colleagues. I deeply regret this, and wish now to withdraw those remarks which have so upset them.

Though the then Churchill College Librarian probably did not know of the existence of the Brendan Bracken/Beaverbrook correspondence until after the publication of my prize-winning book on Bracken, *Poor, Dear Brendan*, just as I certainly did not know that the College was the residuary legatee of any surviving Bracken papers, Dr Hoskin quite properly wrote to inform me of the position and to remind me that I was in breach of copyright. What I tried, obviously too loosely and perhaps facetiously, to convey in the subsequent article was my own sense of bewilderment at being seemingly blamed for discovering important documents and reproducing them without due permission simply because I had been unaware of Churchill College's legal standing in the matter. Readers may or may not realise that, in keeping with Bracken's wishes, most of his personal papers were burned within twenty-four hours of his death. I was fortunate enough to find some that escaped the flames; but I gladly acknowledge that these were the property of Churchill College, which at no point sought, or could have sought, to act as a censor against me.

ANDREW BOYLE

London

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Affirmative, Negative

IN "Affirmative Action, Negative Results" (ENCOUNTER, November), John H. Bunzel stressed that confusion and ambiguity have been characteristic of US government policy on the recruitment and hiring of women and minorities by American colleges and universities. Unfortunately, Bunzel's own discussion embodies the same sources of confusion that have been important in generating the situation that he criticises. He fails to appreciate the critically important distinction between satisfaction of the "equal treatment" or "equal opportunity" norm, on the one hand—and the presence or absence of discrimination (or reverse discrimination), on the other. And he does not seem to recognise the categorical difference between treatment in hiring and in employment.

Equal treatment is not guaranteed in the absence of discrimination; and conversely, measures designed only to ensure equal treatment do not involve reverse discrimination. Equal treatment would be a consequence of the absence of overt discrimination only in a setting in which the average or mean abilities (productivities) of identifiably distinct classes (sexes, races) do not differ, or are not seen to differ by those who make hiring decisions.

Persons must be hired, and salaries must be paid, before their true abilities can be ascertained. At the point of hiring, an employer will use class averages as an index or indicator of individual ability. In this situation, if average abilities are known or predicted to differ as between classes, an employer will hire from the class with the relatively high average ability. No discrimination is involved in the sense of personal taste or preference. An individual from the less-productive class embodies less potential value, given the information available to the employer, than his counterpart from the more-productive class.

But if the range of individual abilities in two classes intersect, as they surely do, members of the group or class characterised by lower average ability are not treated equally with their equals (defined as persons of equal ability when proven) in the other class. To secure employment at all, members of the class with lower average productivity must accept lower wages or assignment to a lower skill category.

Corrective policies designed to ensure equal treatment would require that class information not be utilised to predict individual abilities. One means of accomplishing such results might well be hiring quotas. Proportionality requirements in hiring do not amount to reverse discrimination, any more than disproportionality in hiring in the absence of such requirements amounts to discrimination. No preferential treatment, as such, need be involved in either case.

A SECOND SOURCE of much confusion, and one that is present in Bunzel's article in the discussion that he criticises, lies in the failure to make a distinction between hiring and employment (defined as utilisation). To satisfy the equal-treatment norm, hiring quotas may pass muster. But giving all potential employees an equal ("fair") chance to "prove their worth" by equal opportunities to be hired is quite different from ensuring them equal chances to remain employed regardless of worth. In academic settings, extension of justifiable constraints on hiring to tenure and promotion would undermine the equal-treatment precept. Proportionality in utilisation of persons from two identifiable classes after abilities have been determined and under the empirical assumption that average abilities differ between classes would indeed demonstrate the presence of reverse discrimination. There is no equal-treatment that can be adduced to justify employment quotas.

My only concern here is to clarify ideas that are relevant to any discussion of "Affirmative Action." Difficulties in putting ideas into practice through modern bureaucracy may substantially temper enthusiasm for any politically-orchestrated interference with the working of the market, in academia and elsewhere.

JAMES M. BUCHANAN
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Blacksburg, Virginia

Biblical Capitalism

GLADYS SALES'S LETTER questioning Paul Johnson's opinion about Christianity's contribution to the emergence of capitalism (ENCOUNTER, February) reminds me of my own questioning search for a basis for socialism in the Bible.

I found Christ's advice to those who chose to follow Him—to give away their wealth and drop whatever they were doing—an understandable prerequisite for total devotion. Riches were an undoubted source of conflict of interest for someone with a religious vocation.

But in the case of the rest, the majority, of us mortals,

All the &?# That's Fit to Print (Expletive Deleted)*

Washington, May 1

COL Charlie A. Beckwith, Army commander of the ground force for the rescue mission into Iran asked whether he intended to resign, as predicted in some press reports, to protest the order to withdraw, responded with an epithet.

NEW YORK TIMES
p.1 dispatch from Richard Halloran

Washington, May 2

ASKED whether he intended to resign, as some press reports have held, to protest the decision to withdraw, Col. Beckwith responded with a bucolic epithet.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE (Paris),
NEW YORK TIMES
dispatch from Richard Halloran

Washington, May 3

COL Beckwith, 51, is a Vietnam war veteran and a former green beret, when told about the reports that he had disagreed with aborting the mission, he replied: "Sheer bullshit, sir."

DAILY TELEGRAPH *(London)*

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Christ gave tacit and unequivocal support to private enterprise. Take, for instance, the parable about the nobleman who, before going away, gave his servants money "to trade with until I come back." Upon his return, each servant gave account of the use he had made of his master's money, the nobleman praising and rewarding each servant in proportion to the expansion of capital that they had achieved. The last servant, having not risked at all the money given to him, was reprimanded as a "scoundrel" and his share given to the servant that had made the most money.

Another parable confirms Christ's respect for private property. It is the one about the man who let out his vineyard to farm workers and then went abroad. When the crop was harvested, he repeatedly sent servants to collect his share of the crop but to no avail. Finally, he decided to send his own son, who was killed by the farm workers. At this point of the story, Christ asks his audience: "What then do you suppose the owner will do to them?" He himself replies in unusual, harsh terms: "He will come and destroy the men who were working his property and hand it over to others. . . ."

Would Christ have used these parables to explain his moral teachings, had He not felt it was right to make money and to own "means of production" such as tillable land?

I think Paul Johnson could have made a stronger case in his article, since the Bible abounds with sayings supporting his thesis.

JORGE BILBAO

Barcelona
Spain

AUTHORS

Tobias Wolff is an American short story writer and novelist who teaches English at Syracuse University in New York. His novel *Ugly Rumours* was published by Allen & Unwin in 1974.

Walter Laqueur is Director of the Institute of Contemporary History and the Wiener Library in London, and chairman of the Research Council of Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. His previous historical studies include *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918–33* (1974) and *Guerrilla* (1976). His novel *The Missing Years* was published by Weidenfeld this spring.

Leopold Labedz is Editor of *Survey*. His most recent articles in ENCOUNTER are "Play It Again, Uncle Sam!" and "Of Myths and Horrors" (January and March 1980).

Malcolm Bradbury is Professor of American Literature at the University of East Anglia. His most recent novel, *The History Man*, was published in 1975 by Secker & Warburg (Arrow Books, 1978). His critical works include *The Social Context of Modern English Literature* (Blackwell, 1971) and *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel* (Oxford University Press, 1973); he is co-editor of the volume on *Modernism* in the Pelican Guide to European Literature (Penguin, 1976, n.e. Harvester Press, 1978).

Laurence Lerner is Professor of English, University of Sussex, and author of *The Uses of Nostalgia* (Chatto, 1972), *An Introduction to English Poetry*, and *Love and Marriage* (Edward Arnold, 1975, 1979). His new book of poems, *The Man I Killed*, is published this summer by Secker & Warburg.

Jill Mann is Lecturer in English, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Girton College. Her *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* was published by Cambridge University Press in 1973; she is working on a study of medieval beast literature.

Andrew Motion is Lecturer in English, University of Hull. His first collection of poems, *The Pleasure Steamers*, was published by Carcanet in 1978, and his study of Edward Thomas comes from Routledge at the end of the year.

Ian Fletcher, Professor of English at the University of Reading, is the author of *Decadence and the 1890s* (Edward Arnold, 1979) and studies of Beaumont and Fletcher, Plato and Swinburne (Longman/British Council). He is the editor of a collection of essays on *Romantic Mythologies* (1967) and of *The Collected Poems of Lionel Johnson*, which will be reissued later this year (Garland, 2nd rev. ed.).

Anthony Thwaite's latest volume of poems, *Victorian Voices*, will be published this autumn by Oxford University Press.

We regret the omission from **Richard Stern**'s "Mail" in our June issue of the copyright line: © Richard Stern 1980.

Summer Issues
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Life & Letters Today

London

DOOM: Kingsley Amis deals with the real threat to the language: the growing illiteracy of serious publications. It is now common (since about 1960 in his view) to find in "posh" papers not just *flaunt* (for flout), but *perpetrate* (for perpetuate, and vice versa).

Among other gross howlers are *unreservably* (unreservedly), *anecdote* (antidote), *paradigm* (paragon), *procuration* (procreation), *voluptuous* (voluminous), *gamut* (gauntlet, also confused with *gambit*), *incarcerated* (incorporated), *emulate* (simulate), *inexorable* (execrable), and dozens more.

As Amis says, the only cure for the professional manhandler of words is the dictionary habit, adding gloomily; "You would be as likely to find him consulting Domesday Book" (which Amis, I'm sorry to say [Paul Johnson writes], misspells as Doomsday).

NOW! MAGAZINE

Hamburg

TOP DOG: *An English visitor asked me the other day what was wrong with us Germans, especially our new way of speaking and writing. "You have, after all", he said, "a great language, rich with words and sounds! And yet the most obvious ideas, attitudes and notions you seem to be incapable of expressing nowadays—and you turn to English phrases and American slang! Your sports pages are full of foreign expressions, and when I listen to your radio or watch your television, then it sounds like something called 'ENGLDEUTSCH'. . . ."*

How true! We like to think of ourselves as "Das Volk der Denker und Dichter" *(the people of thinkers and poets), but we seem to have caught the "English disease."*

In this morning's newspaper headline I find—"UNDERDOG IM DORF" Now what kind of hound is it that is barking around in our village? How many readers have any idea of what the paper is on about? When I pressed the editor to explain he offered some lame definition of "underdog" as an "Aussenseiter der Gesellschaft" *(a social outsider)—which is really barking up the wrong tree! Our language is surely worthier of more than such bare bones.*

WELT AM SONNTAG

London

WORSE THAN PORN?: *Recent reports on a current trial at the Old Bailey have referred to an American publication "The Anarchist's Cookbook" which counsel for the prosecution described as "a recipe for death, mutilation and destruction," containing "detailed instructions to readers how to arm themselves with every kind of dangerous device for use in terrorist activities," and which, I understand, also contains recipes which include dangerous drugs in the ingredients.*

This has reminded me [John Trevelyan writes] that in 1971, when I was responsible for Film Censorship, I read a newspaper report on this publication, and asked the Customs and Excise Department whether, if copies of this book were imported, they would detain them, I was told that since they were only empowered to detain "obscene articles" they would not be able to do this.

I can only hope that the Home Office committee, which is considering obscenity and pornography will appreciate that there are worse obscenities than sexual ones, and that a publication of this kind is likely to do much more harm than any pornography.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

COMMANDS: *In what will undoubtedly be only the first of many series of "Training Dogs the Woodhouse Way" (BBC) Barbara Woodhouse was to be seen teaching puppies how to poo and pee [Clive James writes].*

The dog-owners were told that they could give any command they chose, as long as these two activities were clearly differentiated. "I use 'Quickie!' for puddling and 'Hurry up!' for the other function." At least one viewer came close to puddling himself on hearing this, but hysteria quickly gave way to wonder. If "Hurry up!" is what she says when she wants the dog to perform the other function, what does she say when she wants the dog to hurry up?

Anyway, don't be surprised if, after you have shouted at your child to hurry up, every dog in the district suddenly starts performing the other function. It will only mean that they have been trained the Woodhouse way.

THE OBSERVER

London

WATCH THAT HYPHEN! *Probably the most famous correction printed in any newspaper was the apology to a General who had been described as a "bottle-scarred veteran." After a fulsome apology it declared that he should, of course, have been described as a "battle-scared veteran."*

DAILY TELEGRAPH

New York City

SOCIETAL: A police officer, off duty but in uniform working as a guard at a fast food restaurant in Hillside, N.J., died early yesterday, three hours after he was shot during a robbery attempt. The incident occurred in Gino's Restaurant.

The Union County Prosecutor, John H. Stamler, said that the robber who did the shooting asked the guard for the time and "while the officer was looking at his watch the offense took place."

"We are trying to get up money for a reward now," Mr. Stamler said. "We feel that the only way we are going to break this is with a tip from somebody that is motivated not by societal reasons but because there is money involved."

NEW YORK TIMES

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